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BOB FOSSE: AN ANALYTIC-CRITICAL STUDY

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BOB FOSSE: AN ANALYTIC-CRITICAL STUDY

by

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an analysis of the contributions and innovations of Robert Lewis Fosse to the American musical. First, I will explain how Fosse developed each theatre production and film he has worked on. Next, I propose to show what Fosse set out to do and what he actually accomplished with each major dance.

Then I will review Fosse's contribution to the overall effect of the show or film. Comments in this study will be documented by writings of authorities in dance, theatre, and film. At the end of each chapter, I will draw appropriate conclusions about the phase in Fosse's career that the chapter represents. There will be a summary at the end of the dissertation. I will not be comparing or contrasting Fosse to any other choreographer or director-choreographer, past or present. This dissertation is solely a study of Fosse's contributions to the American musical and of Fosse's growth as a creative artist.

Dancing, acting, choreography, and directing are all areas in which Fosse has gained recognition. With emphasis on dance, Fosse has proven himself in several media and each time has found new ways to "razzle dazzle

'em."[1] He has worked successfully in nightclubs, theatre, television and film. His choreography and directing are marked by his personal style. For thirty years, he has been an influence on popular entertainment. As director-choreographer he has achieved total artistic control, directing both musical plays and films, and he has been critically and popularly successful in both media.

He has had the distinction of winning Antoinette Perry Awards for six shows. He won one each for The Pajama Game, Damn Yankees, Redhead, Little Me, and Sweet Charity, and two Tony Awards for Pippin. In addition, he won a Donaldson Award for The Pajama Game, a Dance Magazine award for choreography, the Saturday Review Drama Critics Poll for Little Me, an Oscar for Cabaret, three Emmys for Liza with a Z and a Drama Desk Award for Pippin. "He's a major force in the field, has influenced countless younger choreographers and has elevated the state of the art simply because he reached and has achieved so much recognition from his peers and from the general public,"[2] said Lee Theodore, artistic director of the American Dance Machine.

This dissertation on Fosse is organized chronologically in order to give a historically oriented analysis of Fosse's artistic development. The first chapter is a brief survey of the historically important developments and the people involved in dance prior to Fosse's work as

a choreographer. This chapter helps to place Fosse's contributions into a historical perspective.

The second chapter deals with his early training and dancing experience in burlesque and low-class nightclubs. Fosse has used humor and sexuality in his work, which was influenced by this period throughout his career. This chapter also focuses on his exposure to the various entertainment media prior to his choreographing The Pajama Game. It includes his later nightclub appearances, stage, film and television work. During this time, he danced with his wife, Mary Ann Niles, in prestigious nightclubs. His stage work included the National Companies of Call Me Mister and Make Mine Manhattan. His work on Broadway was in Dance Me a Song and as an understudy to Harold Lang in Pal Joey. In between the stage shows, he was frequently seen on top television shows such as Your Hit Parade, Show of Shows, Toni Review, Admiral Review, Kate Smith Show and others. In 1953, he made three films in Hollywood, The Affairs of Dobie Gillis, Give a Girl a Break, and Kiss Me Kate. During this time, Fosse became aware of his limitations as a dancer and his ability as a choreographer.

The third chapter concerns itself with Fosse as a choreographer. This chapter includes the musicals The Pajama Game, Damn Yankees, Bells Are Ringing, and New Girl in Town. The films are My Sister Eileen, The Pajama Game and Damn Yankees. During this time, Fosse

established his trademark of hat, pelvic grind, isolations and pronounced sense of rhythm. He also established Gwen Verdon as a dancing star.

The fourth chapter explores the first part of Fosse's career as a choreographer-director. The shows covered in this chapter are the musicals Redhead, The Conquering Hero, How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, Little Me, Pleasures and Palaces, and Sweet Charity. Also included are two television specials, The Seasons of Youth and The Wonderful World of Entertainment. Both the 1961 and the 1963 revivals of Pal Joey in which Fosse starred are briefly mentioned. Fosse's sense of rhythm not only enriched his dances but also helped to create precision in his timing as a stage director. He is adept at integrating his dances into a plot, without detracting from the theatricality of the numbers. Fosse is a master of humor and satire; irony and exaggeration all blend into his style. What had worked for him as a choreographer carried over into his directing. Thus, a Fosse musical is truly one seamless piece.

Further development of his choreographic and directorial technique is the focus of the fifth chapter. This period begins with his film Sweet Charity. Though the film was a commercial failure, it permitted Fosse to experiment with closeups, zooms, stop motions and blurred focus. His next film. Cabaret, was both a commercial and

artistic success. Reality was no longer an obstacle in in a musical. Fosse demanded it. He forced the songs to be sung, all except "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," on a cabaret stage. The camera moved as sensually as the characters. Fosse used what he had learned about film technique to create the television special, Liza with a Z. Next, Fosse returned to the stage to direct Pippin. By this show, Fosse had become so self-confident that he no longer needed to prove himself with intricate patterning. He could be satisfied with understatement and simplicity. But most of all, in Pippin, Fosse's staging was the star and it saved a weak show from failure. Another surprising Fosse move came as he turned to direct the non-musical film, Lenny. Once again, Fosse had a successful concept. The film was done as a pseudo-documentary show in black and white. Attention was given to realistic details and rhythm. Fosse's next stage musical, Chicago, followed the mood of Cabaret and Pippin. Though the show was well-executed, Fosse did not move far enough away from the previous successes to satisfy most of the critics. However, Fosse's intention was not to innovate but to perfect. Fosse's most recent stage endeavor, Dancin' has no book. It is a potpourri of Fosse choreography. Fosse's last film, All That Jazz, goes beyond realism into the realm of hallucinations and surrealism. Two films in which Fosse acted, Thieves and The Little Prince are also

briefly discussed in this chapter. Fosse also worked on a one-woman Broadway show for Liza Minnelli, Liza.

The last chapter, Chapter Six, is a conclusion. It summarizes Fosse's major achievements.

NOTES

[1] "Razzle Dazzle" was a song in Chicago with the repeated line in it, "Razzle dazzle 'em." Critics frequently used the phrase to describe Fosse's work.

[2] Personal interview with Lee Theodore, 29 July 1982.

I. BROADWAY DANCE PRE-FOSSE

In order to put Fosse's creative contributions in historical perspective, I would like to present a brief survey of the important developments in dance in American musicals and cite major talents involved from the turn-of-the-century up to Fosse's emergence as a choreographer. Dance has always been one of the elements of American musicals. However, the types, quality, and quantity of dancing in the American musical have undergone numerous changes as the musical has developed. The major genres of dance that have been adapted for musicals are ballet, social, precision, modern, tap and jazz. Ballet originated in the sixteenth century in the European courts. As it developed in the 1700s, it became based on five positions and dancers would rise from the floor in defiance of gravity. In ballet, the dancer's legs were rotated outward. In addition to the stage, social dancing was also done in ballrooms by couples. Some examples are the waltz, foxtrot and tango. Precision dancing was devised by John Tiller in England in 1884 which was later adapted for American musicals. Jacques Vernon of The Dance Magazine explained, "Precision dancing demands uniformity of movement and the subjection of the individual

personality to the group unit."[1]

Modern dance was a reaction against ballet. It was based on natural body rhythm rather than the formal positions used in ballet. Modern dance "asserts that there are as many positions as are needed by the artist to create his effects."[2] In modern dance, the legs were kept in a normal walking stance. The oldest form of an American dance genre was tap. Agnes de Mille explained how it evolved:

> In the middle of the nineteenth century, there occurred a tremendous immigration by the Irish. The Irish tinkers traveled everywhere in the South, and they performed their jigs and reels and clog dances wherever they went. The foot rhythms delighted the Negro slaves who learned them quickly, changed the Irish downbeat to the syncopated off-rhythms and added African emphasis--the free, loose swing of body and arm and the spontaneous facial exercises. (This was a real transformation, for the Irish dance permits almost no arm or body movement; head and torso are held rigid. The Irish dancer seems to live only through his feet, in a starved rocky kind of way, rooted into the ground, beating defiant tatoos on the bare earth.) Under the Negro, the decorous hornpipes and Irish clog became the exuberant buck and wing, tap, and jazz.[3]

The last genre, jazz, was a dance form that Jack Cole devised and developed in the United States. It originated when Cole danced Oriental movements to swing music. A specific dance vocabulary was developed and performed to music with pronounced rhythm and syncopation.

In the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, dance was added to musicals as a

divertissement. Much of the Broadway show dancing, at that time, was of European origin or influence. One reason for this was the lack of native American trained dancers and native American composers.

One of the earliest pioneers in modern dance was Loie Fuller. Arthur Todd of Dance Magazine asserted, "Loie, actually, was the first American dancer, aside from the Negroes, to make any innovations in dance. All the others who had preceded her had been content to dance what had already been danced before."[4] Fuller popularized the skirt dance. Though the skirt dance had been performed in vaudeville, Fuller has received the most recognition for performing this dance. In a skirt dance, usually a filmy silk skirt is manipulated into various shapes in order to create sculptural designs. Fuller was said to have first performed the dance when a hypnotism scene was added to a road company production of Quack M.D. and the skirt that she pulled out of the trunk for that scene was too long.[5] In 1886, she performed her skirt dance in Little Jack Sheppard at the Bijou and again in the Big Pony. The version of the skirt dance she performed in Uncle Celestin, in 1892 at the Casino, was called "The Serpentine." It was danced to "Loin du Bal," by Gillet. Don McDonagh in his book, The Complete Guide to Modern Dance, described it:

> The dancer appears on a darkened stage in a long silken dress that is cinched at the waist and falls to the floor. A wavy line circles the garment at the hem, and a similar wavy line undulates across the circle-cut neckline. Suddenly the folds of the dress begin to ripple and seethe and light beams out from the dancer. She holds the hem at shoulder height and with rapid 'rowing' motions creates cascades of folds in it. It becomes a swirling, billowing mass of motion.
>
> She moves from side to side, always bathed in lights, and then, turning her back, she dips her head toward her audience and the skirt now becomes like a flower circling her torso, when a moment before it had been like some enchanted butterfly. The dance ended with the filmy folds collapsing around her in light-stained glory.[6]

Fuller was really more of a technologist than a choreographer. She was noted for her experimentation with light. Arthur Todd explained, "She created a dance for a golden light, another for red, one for blue and so on with the final dance performed in total darkness with only a single beam of light cutting across the stage."[7]

Fuller was an early influence on Isadora Duncan who toured with her briefly. Duncan perceived ballet as being artificial and desired to create "truth" through her style of spontaneous flowing movement in flowing gowns. Her freedom included dancing barefoot and exposing her limbs.

As American ragtime and jazz developed, dance numbers of American origin were created to pictorialize the rhythmic dynamics of the music. In 1911, Blossom Seeley stopped the show, The Hen Pecks, with a song and

dance called "Toddlin' the Toledo," David Ewen, in his New Complete Book of the American Musical Theatre, observed, "Toddling soon became a favorite form of social dance, very much in the style of the turkey trot and was one more stimulus in creating a nationwide interest in social dancing."[8] Also in that production was a young man named Vernon Castle, and his wife Irene. After The Hen Pecks closed, they took a routine similar to the "Toddlin'" number to the Cafe de Paris in Paris. Upon their return to New York, the Castles became dancing stars. People tried to imitate their manner and appearance. They were the first theatrical couple to dance in contemporary clothes rather than in costume. Shows were written for them, and "The Castle Walk" was named for them. Castle described his "walk" in his book Modern Dancing:

> First of all, walk as I have already explained in the One Step. Now raise yourself up slightly on your toes at each step, with the legs a trifle stiff, and breeze along happily and easily, and you know all there is to know about the Castle Walk. To turn a corner you do not turn your partner round, but keep walking her backward in the same direction, leaning over slightly--just enough to make a graceful turn and keep the balance well--a little like a bicycle rounding a corner. If you like, instead of walking along in a straight line, after you have rounded your position, which will naturally cause you to go round in a circle. Now continue, and get your circle smaller and smaller until you are walking around almost in one spot, and then straighten up and start off down the room again. It sounds silly and is silly. That is the explanation of its popularity![9]

Every routine of theirs was choreographed and rehearsed minutely until they moved together in synchronized and surprisingly perfect harmony. They would float down long polished floors with a coolness and lightness that increased the excitement of the show. Steps showed off Irene Castle. They would fuse earlier dance steps. For example, the "Castle Walk" taken from the "One-Step," was basically a walk done in time to the music. As the man would start forward on his left foot, the woman would step backward with her right.

The Passing Show of 1912, a revue, focused on dance. The revue format had been used earlier by George W. Lederer for The Passing Show in 1884. The revue was vaudeville made into a Broadway extravaganza. David Ewen commented on Lederer's revue:

> He digressed from the prevailing practices in vaudeville by having text, lyrics, and music expressly written for his production--whereas in vaudeville these were the work of many different people, each act bringing in its own material. But in other respects, as this writer said elsewhere, 'The Passing Show was vaudeville in coat tails, top hat and white tie.' It was much more than that too. It also boasted comedy in skits and routines by the Tamale Brothers; acrobatics in stunts by the Amazons; comedy in imitations of popular actors of the day and satires of current plays; female pulchritude in a series of 'living pictures'; spectacle in a sumptuously mounted 'divertissement' on L'Enfant Prodigue; dancer Lucy Daley, who contributed a novel plantation dance with a group of young colored men.[10]

Soon, others began producing revues. Perhaps the most famous was Florenz Ziegfeld who produced The Ziegfeld Follies. The first season of the Follies was 1907. Beautiful women in spectacular costumes were featured. For the first several seasons, Ziegfeld Girls paraded and marched, more than danced, though a few solo dancers were inserted into the shows. In 1912, rival producers, the Shuberts, decided to compete with Ziegfeld producing The Passing Show of 1912 which included much dance. One of the reasons for the increase in dance was that the director was Ned Wayburn who owned the largest dancing school in the United States. He became best known for his tap and precision routines. The New York Journal of Commerce described the variety of dance in The Passing Show of 1912:

> That is, the dances were billed as incidentals, but really were accepted as principals of a performance which included almost every variety of terpsichorean effort, from grotesque gyrations by Miss Trixie Friganza to the marvelous undulations of Adelaide; from the posturings of the mystic Orientals to the everyday ragtime steps and from the graceful movements of the light toe corrispheres to the boisterous covertings of the Texas Tommies.[11]

In the following year, not only did Wayburn direct The Passing Show of 1913, but Wayburn, because he had an architectural background, he designed the set for "The Capitol Steps" scene. Nearly the whole stage was covered by 36 steps which led to the capitol. There were seven

dance numbers in this one scene. The opening was "The March of the North, East, South, and West" and it was performed by a female chorus. Naomi Cohen, in her dissertation, "The Dance direction of Ned Wayburn: Selected Topics in Musical Staging," described it: "Four columns of dancers entered from the two balconies and from the platform at the top of the staircase. After a sixteen measure introduction, each column marched down the steps to a different musical theme."[12] The next number was an eccentric solo specialty ballet, "The White House Glide," danced by Bessie Clayton. She was supported by an eight women chorus. Clayton had built her reputation on her ability to perform on point for long periods of time, and it is possible that Ned Wayburn didn't choreograph the number.

In the next dance, "The Ballet Girl," Charlotte Greenwood parodied Clayton's number. Having the next performer parody the preceding performer was a technique that Wayburn frequently used. The following dance number was "Zatum," a Whirling Dervish performed by Swan Wood.

Wellington Cross and Lois Josephine, an exhibition ballroom team, performed "The Golden Stairs of Love." Naomi Cohen has described it. "During the song, they performed an Innovation--a Hesitation Two-Step done in the Butterfly pose, in which the couple faced each other with arms stretched out to their sides. The Innovation

was frequently used in theatrical choreography since it was the only social dance that was performed without the couple actually touching each other."[13]

Some acrobatics were done by Carter de Haven and Fred Nice, Jr., in "The Tangled Footed Monkey Wrench." The finale was "Inauguration Day," and was a tap number danced by the soloists and 48 female dancers. The male chorus was lined up at the edge of the staircase and didn't dance in the finale.

In 1914, the Castles starred in Whirl of the World, in which they danced the Castle Walk to the Zulu Hop. Also in that year, they starred in Watch Your Step. Irving Berlin's ragtime and jazz tunes complemented the Castle's dancing of the tango, foxtrot, one-step, and syncopated walk.

The Castles weren't the only famous dancing couple. Impelled by the dance craze of 1914, Ruth St. Denis partnered with Ted Shawn. As dissatisfied with ballet as Isadora Duncan had been, Ruth St. Denis experimented with the mystical aspects of Oriental dancing. Ted Shawn added Spanish, Mexican, and American Indian dances to the ethnic repertory of the Denishawn Company.

Two years later, Charles Dillingham imported the first Tiller troupe to America for the revue, The Century Girl. Mary Read became the American representative of

the Tiller dancers. The American producers of precision dancing adopted the basic principles of the Tiller Method, though they tried to develop distinguishing techniques. Allan K. Foster emphasized acrobatics. Russell Markert's troupe was known for its high kicks and fluid motion. More leisurely movements and straight-line toe dancers distinguished the Chester Hale Girls.

Ned Wayburn became renowned for his choreography of precision dancing. Mary Hungerford, in her book, Creative Tap Dancing, observed, "He influenced the ensemble in the direction of precision and tempo. Stimulus came from the English 'Tiller Girls' whose simple kicks and steps were done in such perfect unison as to be breath-taking. The war and the flood of military music gave ample opportunity for Wayburn's development of tremendous military drills with large numbers of girls, accentuating the size of the new enormous stages."[14] In The Century Girl, Wayburn devised a patriotic Act II finale, "When Uncle Sam is Ruler of the Sea," for which Joseph Urban designed a double set of stairs on a revolving stage. Sime Silverman of Variety described the number:

> The revolving stage is employed. On it are high flights of stairs, and, with the background of Urban scenery, the set looks like a steeplechase course. Girls in patriotic dress line the edge of the stage, in single file. Behind them, are grouped sailors and soldiers, girls and boys. As the stage commences to revolve, the girls edging the stage do a single side step, to the music, while those behind, march

> countermarch, in twos, fours and eights alternately, up and over and down the flights of stairs.[15]

Wayburn began working on another show, The Ziegfeld Follies, in 1916. Wayburn's staging and choreography, in addition to Joseph Urban's sets and Lady Duff Gordon's costumes, helped to unify the elements of the revue. Randolph Carter in his book, The World of Florenz Ziegfeld, noted: "The truly great Follies beginning with the 1918 edition and culminating in the 1922 edition, achieved perfection through the highest skill of production; for opulence and splendor, nothing to quite equal them has been seen before or since."[16] Ziegfeld lured Marilyn Miller away from the Shuberts' Passing Show to perform in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1918. The Passing Show that year, however, featured the Astaires. Fred and Adele Astaire had become stars on the vaudeville circuit but had been too young to perform legally on Broadway until the previous year. In The Passing Show, Fred and Adele danced their tango specialty from their vaudeville act. They also performed a bird number in bird costumes with a big chorus similarly attired behind them. Fred also danced with Sammy White and Lou Clayton as waiters in a Childs Restaurant. Astaire recalled, "We slid all over the long tables serving pancakes and coffee."[17]

Then in 1919, George White presented further competition for Ziegfeld and the Shuberts with his Scandals. George White, famous for his version of the Turkey Trot, had performed in The Ziegfeld Follies of 1915 and decided to produce his own revue. He also danced in the first season of the Scandals along with Ann Pennington, whom he lured away from Ziegfeld. The New York Herald praised the show. "Applause stopped the performance when Mr. White made his entry and again when Miss Pennington arrived. He gave his dancing autobiography and she danced a flirtation dance with coy grace. 'The Shimmy Shop' followed, the company, the scenery and the electric lights joining in a final ensemble of wiggly antics."[18]

The same year, the Astaires danced in the operetta, Apple Blossoms. They had no dialogue or songs. The first number they performed was a version of their "sacred cow" vaudeville routine done to Fritz Kreisler's "Tambourin Chinois." The second number had music by Victor Jacobi. Astaire described the number. "The scene was a girls' school and Adele, seated on a bench under a tree, was knitting as I peered over the garden wall. She dropped her ball of yarn, and as it rolled out on the stage, I jumped over the wall à la Doug Fairbanks, retrieved the yarn, and we pantomimed our way in a dance. It scored."[19]

The 1920s continued to develop along the same lines as the previous decade in the area of Broadway dance. In

1922, George Gershwin composed a memorable song for the George White's Scandals, "Stairway to Paradise." Ira Gershwin and Buddy De Sylva wrote the lyrics. George Gershwin described how it was staged. "Two circular staircases surrounded the orchestra on the stage leading high up into the theatre paradise or the flies, which in everyday language means the ceiling. Mr. White had draped fifty of his most beautiful girls in a black patent leather material which brilliantly reflected the spot-lights. A dance was staged in the song and those girls didn't need much coaxing to do their stuff. . . "[20]

As jazz grew in popularity, musicals of the 1920s used more popular dancing. Runnin' Wild, in 1923, popularized the Charleston. Precision dancing also continued to be popular. Upon Albertina Rasch's return from a European tour that same year, she trained fifty girls to become a permanent feature at the Hippodrome. Probably the troupe with the most exposure on Broadway was the Albertina Rasch Girls. Rasch had ". . . adapted the classical ballet technique to the requirements and discipline of the precision dancing troupes,"[21] claimed Jacques Vernon.

The Charleston and the Albertina Rasch Girls were both featured in George White's Scandals of 1925. Tom Patricola danced the Charleston with sixty chorus girls also on stage. A Times article commented on Rasch's

dancers. "The Albertina Rasch dancers who should scarcely be dismissed in a single sentence were supremely charming and unmechanically graceful in their dance offerings."[22]

Ann Pennington introduced the Black Bottom in the George White's Scandals of 1926. The routine which White choreographed for Pennington was less daring than the version of the dance blacks had been doing for years. Alberta Hunter, a popular black entertainer, copyrighted her version of the dance in 1926.

That same year, Martha Graham opened her New York Studio. She was the most important Denishawn disciple who broke away from the company as a reaction against superficiality. She wanted the dance to be more relevant to America. She went further than St. Denis. Acceptance of the pull of gravity urged her to do floor work. She made use of the ground, kneeling, squatting, rising, and sinking. She used the foot in an Oriental way, allowing the toes to curl. Not all of her technique--such as spasm and resistance--was characteristic of the East. Though she did not choreograph for Broadway musicals, she influenced theatre by adding steps and styles to increase the available vocabulary of dance movement.

The following year, a book musical, Good News, had a dance highlight called the "Varsity Drag." Also in 1927 Alex A. Aarons and Vinton Freedley again collaborated

with the Gershwins and the Astaires, this time on Funny Face. The Astaires received show-stopping applause in the Gershwin number, "The Babbit and the Bromide."

In the late 1920s, Ziegfeld chose Rasch to choreograph three musicals for him. They were Rio Rita in 1927, The Three Musketeers in 1928, and Show Girl in 1929. The dance numbers which Rasch choreographed for these book musicals were just as dazzling as the dance numbers in the Ziegfeld Follies had been. Ziegfeld's lavish playhouse, the Ziegfeld, opened with one of Ziegfeld's most fantastic extravaganzas, Rio Rita. Rasch's "Black and White" ballet stood out from the rest of the numbers in the show. One critic from American noted: "Especial commendation is due to the Albertina Rasch Girls who appeared in a series of dancing evolutions, noticeably the Black and White Fantasy in the first scene of the second act."[23] Percy Hammond of the New York Herald Tribune went even further, noting that the ballet corps ". . . performed lovely evolutions, as graceful, uniform and poetic as any dances you will see this side of the Muscovy. Even if you have to miss your train, wait for the number called 'Black and White.' It is worth the loss of an hour's sleep."[24]

Though Show Girl was a box-office failure, Rasch's ballet done to Gershwin's "An American in Paris" was superior to the "Black and White." A critic for

American described it:

> One of the impressive picturesque flashes in the moving story is George Gershwin's symphonic composition, 'An American in Paris.' Denny Kerrigan, the rhyming greeting card salesman in which part Eddie Foy Jr. creditably is shown weaving through the traffic, the laughter and light of a Paris night, until he is swept to sit with beauty and gayety--and wine--at the American bar that appears flimsily, as it should in the background.
>
> Into this fascinating spectacle, Harriet Hector, premiere danseuse, moves with the grace of rippling water and holds her audience spellbound by the majesty and the daring of her art. It is a great tribute to her that this astounding performance should stand as it does, against the symmetry and poetry of the Albertina Rasch ballet. It is vastly superior even to that masterpiece, the moonlight ballet of Rio Rita.[25]

The choreography of the 1930s marked the first couple of unsuccessful attempts by Agnes de Mille to choreograph on Broadway and the first few successfully choreographed shows of Georges Balanchine. Rasch's choreography remained highly visible. Her choreography was most noted, during this decade for the three related revues, Three's a Crowd in 1931, The Band Wagon also in 1931 and Flying Colors in 1932. In these revues, technical innovations enhanced the dance numbers. In Three's a Crowd, it was lighting effects. Robert Littell of The New York Times, noted: "Three's a Crowd is distinguished by its dancing, by Tamara Geva, by a most competent platoon of Albertina Rasch Girls (on whom the sun never seems to set) and by a strange dance with something really new in the way of

lighting effects."[26] The "traditional footlights were eliminated--for the first time in a musical theatre; the stage was lit with lights flooded from the balcony."[27]

The experimentation with lighting continued in The Band Wagon. During the "Dancing in the Dark" ballet sequence, colored lights were changing continuously and were reflected by mirrors on a slanted floor. Another first occurred in The Band Wagon. "Hassard Short devised twin revolving stages as part of the action to increase the effect on the eye and contribute additional visual beauty with a quick change of setting. This was the first time in any musical that a revolving stage (let alone two of them) was used for anything except to change the scenery,"[28] explained David Ewen. The stages were used in the closing scene of the first act to create the effect of a merry-go-round in the "I Love Louisa" Bavarian polka number which featured the Astaires. The New York Herald Tribune added, "Late in the show the same machinery was to come into play again with 'White Heat,' the full-dress, high hat dance number in which the revolving stage carries the dancers off."[29]

Rasch came to the aid of Flying Colors when Agnes de Mille quit the show. De Mille's first attempts at raising Broadway's dance standards in the 1930s were too advanced for the time. David Ewen noted that in Flying Colors in 1932, she ". . . was at a total loss in handling

the dancers or adhering to rehearsal schedules; in addition she was in a continual fight with Normal Bel Geddes, who designed the sets, insisting that they were not safe for her dancers, while he hotly maintained that her dances had to be planned to fit his sets."[30] So, Albertina Rasch replaced her on the show. Rasch adeptly made use of the stage that was specially devised to recede into darkness at the end of "Alone Together." Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times observed, "Among the dance numbers, the macabre soul-stroking 'Alone Together' by Webb and Tamara Geva retains the weird despair of the dance Schemes of 'Three's a Crowd.' Albertina Rasch, still maintaining preeminence, has staged dance routines that have a real recognition of the modern spirit."[31] A tap dance around a shoeshine stand to the music of "A Shine on Your Shoes" also received critical acclaim. Richard Lockridge of The Sun praised: "There was more originality than is usual in the dances staged by Albertina Rasch; two delightful youngsters named, if I pick rightly, Buddy and Vilma Ebsen, stopped the show with their prancing and gave that always helpful fillip of something new. It is modern and crisp and clean--clean all ways, in pictorial and spoken line, in costumes and situations."[32]

Also in 1932, Fred Astaire performed in his first musical comedy without his sister. The show was Gay

Divorce. A reviewer from the New York Herald Tribune described the ease with which Astaire adapted to a new partner. "In Gay Divorce, you will see Fred Astaire fluttering his winged dogs numbly, accompanied by Miss Clare Luce whose elegant feet and legs are also, figuratively speaking, feathered. To gay or pensive music by Mr. Cole Porter, they take several heavenly flights in the course of the play, swirling, swooping and soaring as if, like Mr. Atkinson's swallows, their home was in the air."[33] It was Astaire's desire for perfection which led to that sense of ease he created when performing. Astaire left Broadway for Hollywood where he starred in numerous films and heightened the quality of dance in them. Ginger Rogers was his first film dancing partner and she partnered with him when Gay Divorce was adapted for film in 1934.

Though Balanchine perferred concert to Broadway choreography, he was represented on Broadway for thirteen years beginning with the Ziegfeld Follies of 1936. It was also in 1936 that Balanchine became firmly established on Broadway with his choreography for On Your Toes. In On Your Toes, Balanchine effectively used tap as well as ballet. By the 1930s, tap was slowed down with the "riff" technique, which was a "series of small sounds using the heel and toe and clocking heels and toes together while scarcely moving, providing subtle

accents."[34] Tap began to be used in different ways as ballet returned to favor on Broadway. A reporter for the Morning Telegraph related, "The once familiar tapping routine, perfect in its precision, has given way to choreographic patterns original in style and execution. Thus, under the new terpsichorean system, while the ensemble is still a definite unit, sets of dancers often to contrasting rhythms weave in and out of the coordinated web to form the creative dance tapestries now on exhibit in Broadway carnivals."[35]

It is this aspect of Balanchine's choreography, the intricate, extraordinary and intriguing patterning for which he is noted. On Your Toes in 1936, which presented two satirical ballets, one being a jazz/tap number, was a milestone in American musical theatre history. This was the first musical comedy which Georges Balanchine choreographed for Broadway. Emily Coleman of The New York Times observed, "Viewed either at the time or in today's perspective, the Balanchine shows for Broadway were pioneers in the trend of integrating dancing into the book of a musical. On Your Toes which contained the unforgettable 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' marked the first time that the word choreographer had ever been used in the credits of an American Musical Comedy."[36] On Your Toes starred Ray Bolger. Ellen Jacobs in her book, Dancing, claimed: "Black choreographer Herbert Harper, who was Mr.

Balanchine's assistant for the production, taught Ray Bolger to rhythm tap expressly for that scene."[37] That was for the "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" number, in which "Mr. Bolger danced desperately, beginning with jazz's simple single taps, thence proceeding to triple hoof-beats and flights of soaring,"[38] as Percy Hammond noted. The piece created real tension as well as genuine comedy. The other ballet in On Your Toes was a satire on classic ballet traditions. "No funnier cartoon of such a ballet as 'Scheherazade' has ever been seen than the one that Mr. Balanchine has created in 'La Princesse Zenobia' with its intertwined adagios, its twirling chorus, its belligerent trumpeters, its mockery of Slavic fury and with Mr. Bolder made up--at least with his face and neck made up--as one of its leaping Negro slaves,"[39] John Mason Brown of the New York Evening Post commented.

The following year, 1937, Balanchine choreographed Babes in Arms. Frederick Russell of The American Dancer noted: "Balanchine's favorite number in any of the Broadway shows with which he has been associated is still the ballet. 'Peter's Journey,' the around-the-world dream travelogue executed by Duke McHale in Babes in Arms."[40] The critics were unanimous in their praise of this number. John Anderson of the New York Evening Journal described it: "It is Peter's dream journey which gives Mr. Balanchine the opportunity for his brilliant

choreography and gives Duke McHale the chance to dance away with the show in the midst of cardboard skyscrapers, swirling seas of blue cloth ocean and the tropical enchantment of paper palm trees and cellophane mermaids."[41] This ballet, which was in the second act, was "built around the 'imagine' song theme, wherein set pieces portray a dream voyage to Hollywood, to Europe, to the African wilds, and back to reality. It's a highly imaginative terpsichorean conception under the skillful Balanchine creativeness,"[42] observed Abel Green of Variety. This ballet was self-contained.

Moreover in 1937, five years after her first unsuccessful attempt to choreograph on Broadway, Agnes de Mille once again failed. Robert Alton had to replace her on Hooray for What in 1937. She had been choreographing a serious realistic anti-war ballet which was made into a musical comedy stereotype. The show had to fit Ed Wynn's broad comedy style; there was no room for subtle satire.

The broad satire of "At the Roxie Music Hall" in I Married an Angel in 1938 was the highlight of the show. This ballet in I Married an Angel was interpolated to give the ballerina, Vera Zorina, something to do and also to be a diversion from the plot. However, Balanchine went even further, with the idea by making it surrealistic. Director Josh Logan recalled: "Of course, the ballet

part of our Music Hall divertissement gave Zorina her chance. And Balanchine had an evil brainstorm for it. All New York was awaiting Salvador Dali's first visit to America. Balanchine stole his thunder by revealing in the ballet, all the tricks of surrealism before Dali arrived."[43] Balanchine was as comfortable choreographing for solo performers as he was for the ensemble.

Balanchine was also adept at adapting his classical background in order to entertain the Broadway audience. Ten years prior to Holm's Kiss Me Kate, Balanchine choreographed the adaptation of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors The Boys from Syracuse in 1938. Burns Mantle of the Daily News observed: "Balanchine has combined art as he knows it from his better ballet training with tap dancing interludes that have a true Broadway Swing. . . . he achieved fine effects both with a trio danced as a refrain for one of the popular songs entitled 'Shortest Day of the Year,' and a rushing full ensemble following another well-liked number, "Sing for your Supper."[44]

Albertina Rasch's career came to an end in the 1940s. The last important show Rasch choreographed was Lady in the Dark in 1941. The critics called her dances graceful, resourceful, imaginative and shimmering. "The dancing by a group of Albertina Rasch girls was exquisite, particularly in one beautifully dressed ballet called 'The Dance of the Tumblers,'"[45] praised Sidney Whipple of

The New York World-Telegram.

Rasch's success over the years stemmed from her flexibility. Cecil Smith, in 25 Years of American Dance acknowledged, "The Albertina Rasch style fused the precision of the Tiller Girls with some of the devices and indivual figurations of ballet; and it accomplished all this with a tailored sleekness borrowed from the ballroom dancing tradition introduced something over a decade earlier by Vernon and Irene Castle."[46] The earliest screen credit for dance direction was given to Rasch. She changed with the times and integrated modern dance into her work when it became the vogue in the 1930s.

The 1940s, however, brought several new important choreographers to the Broadway stage. These choreographers included the American born Agnes de Mille, Jack Cole, Jerome Robbins, Michael Kidd and the European-born and trained Hanya Holm. Each one of these choreographers made important achievements in integrating dance numbers into the plot. Also, the dancers whom each of them used were better trained than most Broadway chorus dancers had formerly been. De Mille's major contributions to the American musical occurred with her choreography in the musicals of the 1940s. John Martin of The New York Times observed: "For once the dances in a musical show, in spite of the fact that they used a good deal of ballet

technique, were thoroughly American in quality without a hint of 'chichi' and were about something. They bore a recognizable relationship both to the plot of the piece and to human living and they were danced by people instead of by technical automata."[47]

It was de Mille who made the first major choreographic contribution of the decade with Oklahoma! in 1943. By the time de Mille joined the collaboration on Oklahoma! she had more power. Her choreography for the ballet, "Rodeo," influenced the style of the ballets in Oklahoma! She insisted that there be no one in the chorus of whom she didn't approve. That was a difficult request because de Mille was looking for talent and personality, while the rest were interested only in the way the chorus girls looked. Finally, out of all of the chorus girls who were hired, only two weren't classically trained. De Mille intended to use dancing to substitute for words. She set twice the number of dances that were ultimately used in the show in two weeks. She wanted to abstract a style from her research in order to show the "attitude and dance culture behind dance gesture."[48] In order to achieve this effect, she "asked Mary Gadd, the head of the American Country Dance Society to spend a day instructing my boys in how to offer their hands to the women, to bow to them, to pass them in and out of the group, courteously, gallantly, as if they cared about them, a point of view

in which many of the boys could afford to take instruction."[49]

The most controversial ballet in the show, "Laurey Makes Up Her Mind." was a dream ballet. Though there had been dream ballets in musicals as early as 1926, in Peggy Ann, this one was different. It was integrated into the plot, as were all of the dances in Oklahoma! Threads from six of the musical numbers in the show blended together to create the music for the dream ballet. The dance, rather than be only an entertaining divertissement, developed naturally from the context by representing the conflict in the mind of the main character.

As de Mille continued making important contributions in the use of ballet in Broadway shows, Jack Cole established the vocabulary of American jazz dancing on Broadway. In addition to having been an important influence on Robbins, Kidd, and Fosse, "Cole is considered by Lee Theodore to be:

> . . . the father of American jazz dancing, although there were other people like Katherine Dunham and other creative geniuses that contributed to establishing vocabulary. It was actually Cole who brought it all together in America very early on. He was the first visionary to take Negro jazz dancing, Oriental dance, Spanish dancing and put it through his own motor idiom because he was an extraordinary dancer and what came out is what we now call jazz dancing. After that, there were many many brilliant geniuses like Fosse and Robbins who were influenced by it but he was the first.[50]

Cole's training had ranged from Denishawn to LaMeri to Oriental experts. De Mille explained that his technique involved "classic training plus acrobatic falls and many kinds of knee slides."[51] His footwork was done on the heel or flat foot. No points were used. His arm movements were angular and seldom undulating.

His dance numbers were outstanding in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1943. "Jack Cole performs with his customarily brilliant eccentricity in two of the best dance numbers--the first a frantic item called 'The Wedding of a Solid Sender' and the second, an Oriental oddity that is both peculiar and provocative,"[52] praised John Anderson of the New York Journal American. The second was called "Hindu Serenade." Cole began the number seated at the center of the stage with one of his legs tucked under him and the other one extended but bent at the knee. One of his hands was placed on his thigh and the other hand was draped over the knee of his bent leg. Don McDonagh described the performance:

> Three women in native costume stand behind him with one hand bent back and the other held up to the side of the head shielding the face. The air is heavy with pseudo-contemplation and repose.
>
> Suddenly the man rises and begins an exhausting sinuous, and frantic dervish dance that has him alternately lost in ritual postures and whipping his supple body like a possessed jazz dancer. The three women are a decorative frieze for his energetic and engaging dancing. At one point they sink to the stage, tilting their bodies to one side and extending

> their legs outward. He pauses in his frenzy to give one of them a kick, dispelling the meditative calm of their formation. The piece ends with a decorative frenzy combining high voltage energy and the ritual hand gestures of traditional Hindu dance.[53]

Also in 1944, de Mille achieved her second Broadway success, Bloomer Girl. Though the plot of Bloomer Girl was not innovative, de Mille's Civil War Ballet close to the end of Act Two was. The producers felt that it was too somber to put into the show so late in the evening. However, since this was during World War II, de Mille felt that the audience would "rather have their grief talked about and shared than made light of."[54] The dance depicted the return of Civil War survivors and their gradually forgetting the hardships and reawakening to new joy. The audience and critics agreed with de Mille. Louis Kronenberger of New York Newspaper P.M. noted: "Miss de Mille's choreography is clean, crisp, inventive, and well balanced. A Civil War ballet is clean and sharp and managed to be serious without being arty or wrong for Broadway. The first-act finale introduces some lovely waltzing and the lighter numbers are lovely and gay."[55] In addition to de Mille's contributions, 1944 marked the debut of Jerome Robbins as a Broadway choreographer. Whereas de Mille had developed her work through melody. Robbins was rhythmic, depending on beats. De Mille explained, "Robbins is besot by rhythm, visual

and bodily rhythms as well as auditory, and when he gets hold of a gesture, he continues inventing out of the core of the matter until he has built an entire design and must wait for the composer to catch up. His rhythm will then work in counterpoint to the musical patterns."[56] Robbins' choreography has a sense of muscular action that was new to the theatre. De Mille described it. "There is above all his free-limbed and virile use of the body, a complete spontaneous release as in sports, an exuberant, a total employment of all energies. Whether the gesture is gay or anguished, all resources are put into play and the strength and vigor of the movement communicates with the gusto of an athlete's."[57] He used actual acrobatics and stunts in his dances.

Robbins' first Broadway musical, On the Town, in 1944, was an adaptation of his ballet, Fancy Free, about three sailors on shore leave in New York City. De Mille explained: "The comment is truthful and poignant, the humor superb, and the style altogether fresh. It is in the vernacular, the contemporary jazz idiom, but superimposed on the discipline and cleanliness of classic technique, and it has inaugurated a new choreographic style. A generation of dancers has borrowed from it literally. It was obviously the expression of a new, original and first-class talent derivation from no one."[58] "Miss Turnstiles" and "Gabey in the Playground

of the Rich" were the outstanding numbers in the show. Robbins captured the rhythms of daily routines and distinctive actions of common people.

Robbins choreographed one of the first musicals which treated the 1920s satirically, Billion Dollar Baby in 1945. David Ewen commented, "Much of the action--and a good deal of the unusual interest in the musical--is carried by Jerome Robbins' inventive ballet sequences, the best of which are the 'Charleston,' 'The Marathoners,' the 'Miss America Pageant,' 'The Gangster Funeral and Wake,' and the 'Love Ballet.'"[59] This satire commented on all of the different stereotypes of that era. Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune described it:

> The Charleston number interlude in the first act is so full of caustic comment that Miss Green's final tagging of the episode with a tear jerking ballad, 'Broadway Blossom' becomes something of a tour-de-force. Nightclub hostesses, speak-easy proprietors, rum runners and gangsters are all in the picture, including the average citizen who frequently blew his top in that easily recognizable period. The enchanting symbolic dance of the climax, with Miss McCracken doing a superbly versatile job of envisaging the less glamorous side of life in the 'terrific twenties' is equally good.[60]

Carousel, the following year, was a difficult show to choreograph because it was based on a strong and well-written play; there seemed little need for dancers. De Mille stated: "The ballet in Act II therefore represented probably the hardest challenge I'd ever met. It entailed a real job of dramatic invention, close to

playwrighting."[61] Once again, de Mille received critical acclaim. Otis Guernsey, Jr. of The New York Herald Tribune described: "Of course there is an Agnes de Mille ballet; and of course it tells a story, with the lighter touches of dancing gradually becoming serious and ending on a note of sorrow. The ballet enacts the barker's daughter's life as Billy Bigelow looks down on her from Heaven after his death and Bambi Linn dances the laughter and tears of the fifteen-year-old with pertness and grace."[62] Thus, de Mille proved how effectively dance, just as well as music, could artistically heighten the emotional content of the plot.

The ethnic dances of Brigadoon in 1947, another de Mille show, added to the atmosphere and drama. All of the dancers learned classic Scottish dancing. Howard Barnes explained: "The dancing is probably the key to the compelling quality of the entertainment. Miss de Mille has rarely been more inspired than she was in such numbers as 'I'll Go Home with Bonnie Jean,' 'Come to Me, Bend to Me,' or a melancholy funeral dance accompanied by real bagpipes."[63] She cleverly adapted traditional Scottish dances to enhance the folk character of the play. Brooks Atkinson described:

> For a kind of idyllic rhythm flows through the whole pattern of the production, and Miss de Mille has dipped again into the Pandora's box where she keeps her dance designs. Some of the dances are merely

> illustrations for the music. One or two of them are conventional, if lovely, maiden round dances. But some of them, like the desperate chase in the forest are fiercely dramatic. The funeral dance to the dour tune of bag-pipes brings the footsteps of doom into the forest and the sword dance, done magnificently by James Mitchell, is tremendously exciting with its stylization of primitive ideas.[64]

In addition to earning credit for her innovative choreography, de Mille was also the first choreographer-director of an American musical. She had strong reasons for wanting to take charge of the whole production: "Producers and managers are aroused by the threat of the choreographer's growing demands. Authors go to peculiar pains to write dancing out of the shows or keep it well corralled in unimportant little corners. Rank beginners are brought in at bottom prices. There is a very real rivalry between directors and choreographers for prestige and percentages."[65] Rogers and Hammerstein gave her a chance to direct Allegro. Brooks Atkinson noted: "Agnes de Mille has given the play fresh direction with a number of original and clarifying ideas that leave the stage wide open for dancing. Although she has composed a number of beguiling ballets, it is difficult to recall them as music-hall numbers for they open spontaneously out of the narrative."[66] Though de Mille only choreographed the rest of her Broadway shows, she had opened a door for future choreographers-directors who included Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse.

Even as a choreographer, humor was one trait that could be easily recognized in any Robbins show. Again de Mille explained:

> In its grossest aspects, it takes the form of straight gags, very good ones but bold and outrageous. In its more sophisticated manifestations, he introduces surprising and impertinent conclusions into his pattern, deliberately leading one to expect a certain resolution and then insolently offering another, untraditional and slightly rude though always logical because he is never foolish. He jokes with rhythms, with space, with revelations of bodies, with light, with silence, with sound. These are all elements of style.[67]

Humor was abundant in High Button Shoes, in 1947, which was set in 1913. Robbins created such a precise imitation of a Mack Sennett film that Sennett ended up suing him. Robbins' version was "a combination of old burlesque routines and modern ballet techniques. Swift and insane like a jiggly old film, it is an inspired bit of animated entertainment,"[68] described Brooks Atkinson. The number had many people on stage doing crazy things. "The big second-act chase turns out to be a Mack Sennett two-reeler with a wealth of glorious nonsense. The bathing beauties chill their toes in the waves and skitter about in the most outrageously girlish pantomime. The seedy cops fly trembling into the air at the slightest surprise, and the depraved villains look as if they had crawled out from under an ancient sun dial. The ballet is done at terrific speed and piles on its laughs,"[69]

added William Hawkins of the New York World-Telegram.

There were several other entertaining numbers in the show. One was "Papa Won't you Dance with Me" which provided Nannette Fabray and Jack McCauley an opportunity to polka. William Hawkins noted that another number, "Jealous," was ". . . tastefully staged like a vaudeville act 'in one.' Miss Fabray and Jack McCauley sing it and go into a politely humorous soft-shoe that treats the memory of the two a day with all respect."[70] Hawkins later observed that coming out of nowhere was ". . . a sardonic tango danced fiercely by Helen Gallagher and Paul Godkin. Gritting their teeth to learn this 'new' dance by mail, the pair stops just this side of an apache dance."[71]

Another important choreographer, Michael Kidd, began working on Broadway in 1947. His choreography for Finian's Rainbow in 1947, Guys and Dolls in 1950, and Can-Can in 1953, established him as one of Broadway's best choreographers. Finian's Rainbow avoided recognizable ballet movements. Ezra Goodman of Dance Magazine noted that it blended "folk and modern elements with occasional use of an arabesque, turn or pirouette to emphasize or differentiate character or incident."[72] There was no apparent place for dancing in the show. Goodman explained how Kidd kept the dances from intruding by removing "the distinction between the singers and dancers

by mixing the two groups. That way he was able to lead from a song to dance."[73] He "also handled all exits and entrances of groups of people in the dramatic continuity and this made for a choreographic feeling throughout the show."[74] Anita Alvarez played a mute in the show who expressed herself through dancing. There is a crock of gold which can grant three wishes. "One of the show's high points is the solo in which she discovers the crock. Moving swiftly about to the yearning music of a harmonica, she depicts most clearly the troubled desires of her frustration,"[75] described William Hawkins.

The following year, in 1948, Hanya Holm, a modern dancer, broke away from her Mary Wigman training to develop an American style. She successfully choreographed Broadway musicals. Prior to Fosse's choreographic beginnings, she was noted for Kiss Me Kate in 1948, and Out of This World in 1951. She would adapt her dances to the story-line, according to her own ideas. She would work within the boundaries to "highlight, expedite, intensify and entertain."[76] She had a strong identification with the book of a show. Thus, her dances were integrated into her shows. If she knew folk dances of a country, she did them correctly. Otherwise, she did her impression of that dance. People in many countries danced in the same manner. She found the principle and characteristic of dance flavor and feeling

more important than the actual steps without them.

For Kiss Me Kate, she registered the complete choreographic score of the dances for copyright in Washington. This was "the first time a dance has ever been so protected and the first time a complete choreographic score has even been a part of the Library of Congress."[77] She used labanotation to accomplish that. (Labanotation was a system of dance notation developed by Rudolph von Laban in 1928.) An array of styles was exhibited in Kiss Me Kate. Walter Terry of the New York Herald Tribune noted: "There is no ballet as such in 'Kiss Me Kate,' but there is dancing, all of it firmly integrated into the show to contribute to the achieving of a total theatrical impression. The dancing gives flow to the musical, it provides the means for transitions in pace or mood or in style, it aids in the definition of character and it accounts for the production's necessary flashes of physical virtuosity."[78] The forms she used were classical ballet, modern dance, jitterbug, soft-shoe, acrobatics, court dance, and folk dance.

1948 was also the year that Balanchine choreographed his last Broadway show, Where's Charley. It was largely successful--as was his first show, On Your Toes--due to the talent of Ray Bolger. Bolger was featured in five numbers in Where's Charley. The ensemble numbers made some attempt to be integrated into the plot. In "The

New Ashmolean Society and Students Conservatory Band," the scene and pace was set by the street-scene marching-formations. The "Pernambuco" was a Brazilian dance number to show the flavor of Charley's aunt's homeland. Brooks Atkinson commented: "Although the ballets are cultivated, you can enjoy them--particularly the stylized band parade and the cotillion drenched with the splendor in the last act. The exotic 'Pernambuco' that concludes the first act is too austere to introduce Mr. Bolger's satiric flourishes."[79]

Another show in 1948 worth mentioning for its choreography was Look Ma, I'm Dancin! in which Robbins creatively employed humor. Robert Coleman of the Daily Mirror, observed that at the end of the first act, Robbins ". . . burlesques dancing of every variety: soft shoe, buck and wing, steps-and-snappy cracks, folk and long hair. It is immensely amusing though a little more sublety might have transformed the burlesque into a genuine satire."[80] Then, in the second act, he created a sleepwalking dance performed in a train. The "Pajama Dance" was "done in practically no stage space at all and builds to a really stirring conclusion."[81] Robbins was just as effective in a classical style. Just before the finale, there is a Swan Lake pas de deux.

In the early 1950s, before Fosse became a Broadway choreographer, Cole, Kidd, Holm, and Robbins continued to

find new ways to integrate dance numbers into the plot. Like Finian's Rainbow in 1947, Guys and Dolls in 1950 was also a satire. Every aspect of the show was germane to the plot. William Hawkins explained: "Two nightclub scenes reveal as much as anything else in the show, just what kind of world these characters inhabit. Their talent is small-time, eager and bedazzled and the choreography satirizes them delightfully. These numbers and the Cuban local color are improvements on fairly familiar dance ideas, but the Crap Game is a socko affaire out of nowhere, with speed, anxiety and momentum."[82] The crap game took place in a sewer.

The revue Alive and Kicking, also in 1950, once again showcased Cole's dancing and choreography. It featured five of his numbers. William Hawkins described:

> The most striking of which is 'Coal Scuttle Blues' done with a minimum of production to a wild accompaniment of brasses and drums in sympathetic syncopation.
>
> Mr. Cole creates dramatic punch with the lazy limp manner in which he prowls around the stage until the moment comes to indulge in tremendous bursts of energy. Through the program he moves from the ascetic black and grey calisthenics of a Shaker meeting to the jewelled lushness of 'Abou Ben Adhem' and a florid calypso strikingly assisted by Gwen Verdon and Marie Groscup.[83]

The following year in 1951, in Out of This World, Holm was once again commended for the integration of her dances into the show. John Martin, of The New York

Times, praised her: "She is no prima donna choreographer who builds up her own numbers and then tries to drape the rest of the show around them; what she does grows simply and logically out of the situation, the characters, the atmosphere of the piece, and as a consequence, they are rich in style and individuality. They are also rich in invention and formal design."[84] An outstanding example of her work occurred in the "Bacchanale" which closed the first act. Martin explained that it functioned:

> . . . to externalize the mood of the enraptured night when Jupiter has descended from Olympus to encompass a mortal maiden. Miss Holm has set the air shimmering. Half a dozen couples move in amorous eagerness, each of them different from the rest, while the grinning figure of Pan stands with bent knees on a tree stump holding them together with his eye or joins them momentarily for a twirl or a violent thrust of the hip. There are bold leaps and lifts, attitudes of taut suspense.[85]

Also outstanding that same year was Robbins' innovative ballet sequence, "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," in The King and I. Robbins created it against a background of spoken chorus and woodblock and cymbals. During this dance, Uncle Tom's Cabin is translated in terms of the Siamese dance. "The literal and pictorial beauty of the dance sequences have both an irresistable charm and a delicate humor."[86]

Once again, oriental dances were presented on Broadway. This time it was by Jack Cole in Kismet in

1953. Cole's dances blended right into the exotic setting and characters in Kismet. John Chapman, of the Daily News stated: "And the dances, as staged by Jack Cole are the best of all the elements in a gorgeous show. The dancers headed by Patricia Dunn, Bonnie Evans, and Reiko Sato, have great wit and style. The style is, of course, pure Jack Cole, which is a Broadway mixture of Balinese and Javanese--but who nowadays knows the difference between Bali and Bagdad."[87] Hollywood, as well as Broadway, benefitted from Cole's dedication to and inventiveness in dance.

The last important musical in terms of dance prior to Fosse's becoming a choreographer which should be mentioned for its choreography was Kidd's Can-Can in 1953. Can-Can took place in turn-of-the-century Paris, and Kidd's choreography helped to make a star out of the then little known Gwen Verdon. Though her lines were cut due to the star's jealousy, Verdon, aided by Kidd's choreography still managed to steal the show. Brooks Atkinson said:

> But the dancing is 'Can-Can's' real contribution to hilarity. The 'Garden of Eden' ballet at the close of the first act is a vivid caricature of the ancient fable. It swiftly sketches in everything from inchworms to flamingos and sea horses, and Miss Verdon's spinning and grinning portrait of Eve is brilliant. The second act includes the breezy cartoon of an apache dance; it is witty in design and skillful in the acting. And, of course, 'Can-Can's' personal can-can at the end is racy and festive.[88]

The apache number blended violence, comedy, and slow-motion. It made "an amusing astute comment on the Bohemian Paris of 1893 and timeless French love for a buck."[89] Previously, Verdon's dancing ability had been overshadowed by that of her dynamic dancing partner, Jack Cole. After Can-Can, it was Bob Fosse who kept Verdon's career alive on Broadway at the same time furthering his own.

By the time Fosse became a Broadway choreographer in 1954, many changes in Broadway dancing had occurred. Martha Graham, with modern dance, and Jack Cole, with jazz dance, had enriched the vocabulary of dance. Holm, de Mille, Robbins, and Kidd, along with Cole, integrated their dances into the plot. They demanded trained dancers for the chorus. The audience learned to appreciate more than just pretty faces and legs in dance numbers. Dance was given a chance to do more in a show than to provide a divertissement or to showcase a performer's talent. Dance could help to establish an atmosphere or mood. It could satirically comment on a theme. A character's attitude, point of view, or emotional response could be shown through dance. Thus, dance had become a respected, important element of American musicals.

NOTES

[1] Jacques Vernon, "Will Precision Troups Always Be Popular?" The Dance Magazine, Feb. 1929, p. 42.

[2] Don McDonagh, The Complete Guide to Modern Dance (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 2.

[3] Agnes de Mille, "From Primitive Dance to Minuet to Slop," The New York Times, 27 Oct. 1963, pp. 102, 104.

[4] Arthur Todd, "The Rise of Musical Comedy in America," Dance Magazine, 1950, p. 24.

[5] Todd, p. 25.

[6] McDonagh, p. 21.

[7] Todd, p. 38.

[8] David Ewen, New Complete Book of the American Musical Theatre (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1958), p. 220.

[9] Vernon and Irene Castle, Modern Dancing (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1914), p. 47.

[10] Ewen, p. 407.

[11] Anon., "The Passing Show a Splendid Display," New York Journal of Commerce, 23 July 1912, n. p.

[12] Barbara Naomi Cohen, "The Dance Direction of Ned Wayburn: Selected Topics in Musical Staging, 1901-1923," Diss. New York University, March 1980, p. 98.

[13] Cohen, p. 103.

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II. FOSSE'S EARLY TRAINING AND CAREER

Robert Lewis Fosse was born to Sarah and Cyril K. Fosse in Chicago, Illinois, June 23, 1927. He was the fifth of six children, four boys and two girls: Cyril K. Jr., Donald, Ed, Patricia, Robert, and Mary Ann. Fosse's mother was of Irish descent and "ran the home but she wisely allowed" his father "to think he did."[1] His father was of Norwegian heritage and a Methodist. His Catholic wife converted, and Fosse was raised as a Protestant. Though he would sometimes sneak over to the Catholic Church, Fosse won honors at his Methodist Sunday School. It was this strict religious upbringing that later came into conflict with his early show business experience.

Cy Fosse enjoyed a brief career in vaudeville with his brother Richard. Fosse claims that his father was "fantastic on spoons."[2] Richard's death from cancer at thirty ended this. Cy Fosse became a Hershey Chocolate salesman. The Fosses lived on the north side of Chicago at 4400 North Ashland Avenue.

At nine, Fosse went to dancing school with his sister Patricia. She had been sent to learn poise, and Fosse tagged along just to have something to do. Fosse's

sister, Mary Ann Dimos recalled: "He had been very ill as a kid. He had double pneumonia twice. He could learn the steps faster than Pat could just watching and never getting up and dancing. Then, finally, he got up and did it and the teacher wanted him to stay and dance. They had the doctor check him out and he could dance."[3] Patricia dropped out, and Fosse stayed. Fosse's ability to watch others and pick up what they do has been an asset throughout his career.

The school, The Chicago Academy of Theatre Arts, was owned and run by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Weaver, a couple of ex-vaudevillians. Originally, the school was located at the corner of Ashland and Montrose, above a drugstore. Later, it was moved to Lawrence near Damon on a second floor. The Weavers offered Fosse "all the lessons he wanted in everything and anything for free as long as they could have ten percent of whatever he earned before he was twenty-one. They saw that much potential in him."[4]

Fosse's brother, Ed Fosse, remembered that to encourage Fosse, his "dad built steps with a platform on top with steps on both sides so when he was a little kid, he just cogged right in with him. He made a slanted bar so they could lay it right down in the living room."[5] Fosse's career began with the traditional dancing school recitals. Then, Weaver thought that it would be a good idea for Fosse to team up with fellow student Charles Grass and put together an act. Margaret Comerford was

their teacher at the time, and Weaver, whom they affectionately called Skipper, was their coach. "He'd select our music and he'd make our orchestrations too. He was a musician."[6] The act was called The Riff Brothers.

There was a monthly showcase at the dancing studio in which the Riff Brothers performed. They were trained to do comedy acts as well as tap, ballet, and acrobatics. Chris, an old clown from vaudeville, would teach the comedy routines. One of the routines was a burlesque bit that Abbott and Costello used to do. It ended with Grass having a mouthful of water which he would blow into Fosse's face in rehearsals but during the show Fosse was doused.[7]

By thirteen, Fosse and Grass were working in vaudeville houses and later in burlesque houses. At that time, they worked about a dozen theatres. The Portage had an amateur night. They played on the bill at the Oak Street Theater, a regular five-act vaudeville house on Friday and Saturday nights. They also worked at the Englewood. After those shows, they would go to the smokers or beer gardens around there. They worked a lot for agent called Jack Matthews. They would split around ten dollars a night.[8]

Eventually, the Riff Brothers entered burlesque. They would be the only legitimate act on the bill. The Riff Brothers had to lie about their age. They were

fifteen and sixteen and were passing for seventeen, which was the legal age to work in nightclubs then. They wore tuxedos to make themselves look older.

Grass was attending Lake High School at the time, and Fosse was attending Amundsen. In spite of long working hours, they both were good students with a strong academic background which included three years of Latin. Fosse was voted "The One Most Likely to Succeed" of his high school class. He was Vice President of the Letterman's Club. His proficiency in swimming and track earned him two athletic letters. He was President of the Senior Class and was awarded a medal for scholastic achievement by the American Legion.

Fosse recalled that he "used to come home after school, do my homework, then go to my performance, go to bed at three a.m. and then get up in time for class."[9] Other times, his "dad used to take him down and sometimes he would do his homework on the dressing room table and then go get some sleep in the back end of his dad's car."[10] During the summer the teenagers would "take turns in the studio, three or four hours at a time."[11] They would alternate days. Other times, they would work together in front of a mirror so that they could coordinate their movements. Charles Grass noted: "The act was pretty good. It was a flashy type."[12]

The Riff Brothers performed a standard four-number

tap act. They'd open with a double and do two singles and close with a double, usually a challenge dance. The opening number was "Lilacs in the Rain" or "I Don't Want to Walk without You." Then Grass would perform a ballet tap. Fosse's solo was done to "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Grass described the number: "He used to do machine gun taps to it and there was a tacit in the middle where he used to do a lot of heel rolls."[13] They would end with "The Bugle Call Rag," a sad challenge tap. One of them would get up and do some kind of spectacular step. They had about four or five challenges. "We weren't as good as the Nicholas Brothers or the Berry Brothers,"[14] Grass recollected. Fosse was always pushing himself to become better.

For a long time, Fosse glamorized his experience in burlesque and would tell marvelous stories about it. He was, however, really very unhappy and scared during that time. His religious upbringing and his activity in burlesque created a strong conflict in the young Fosse. Undergoing analysis as an adult, Fosse realized that he ". . . really hated going away from home and was scared to death that I was in an atmosphere with all those naked ladies running around way over my head."[15] His mother misunderstood. "She thought that you could send a boy of that age into a room full of naked women and it wouldn't bother him--because he was such a good boy. Obviously,

she was wrong. She was one of the smartest women that I have ever known, though."[16] Fosse claims that his mother lived vicariously through him. "I was such an unbelievably good child. She was so proud of my achievements that I kept trying to please her."[17] All of the Fosse boys were close to their mother, but Fosse was probably the closest because he was the only son left at home. As the youngest male in the family, he was always trying to get attention. He wanted to be special. At first, he performed because his mother liked it. Fosse confessed: "Later it was for the pleasures of hearing people laugh and getting entertainment from me."[18]

Though his family supported his dancing ambitions, he was the one who kept pushing himself continually, though all of the memories were not pleasurable. The strippers took cruel advantage of his youth. Paul Gardner of New York Magazine explained: "When the strippers discovered that he was practically a baby, they invented a game. Minutes before the smallish, blondish teen-ager was supposed to go onstage, they would trap him in a corner and with G-strings floating and tassled panties swinging, see if they could arouse an embarrassing bulge in his dancing pants. The little prince of show business would begin reciting Bible verses and baseball scores."[19] Forty years later, Fosse would effectively reproduce this scene in his film, All That Jazz.

Though Fosse thought burlesque "was grungy and terrible and did not like it, he did like working and he learned a lot from it. He even knew he was learning from the comedians."[20] Fosse also learned how to walk in as if he owned the place and talk professionally to the musicians. They would play a few bars of the routine, and he would tell them, "fine." Since Fosse was raised in burlesque, he considers roughness as a part of himself. What critics consider to be vulgar aspects of his work, he feels are Rabelaisian.[21] Fosse's style, both technically and thematically, is rooted in his early career in burlesque. By choice, he has never strayed too far from these early roots. Some critics view this limitation as a deficiency.

Fosse and Grass were so successful in burlesque locally, that they began making weekend trips. They would go to Dubuque or Etna Harbor in Michigan. Toward the end of high school, when Fosse knew he was going to go into the service, he wanted to do more in terms of his career. The Riff Brothers were still in high school at the time and Grass was not interested, so the act broke up six months before Fosse went into the service.

Since the U. S. was in the midst of World War II, there was a shortage of men to M.C. the shows at the local clubs. Occasionally, Fosse was asked to do so. He claims to have been the youngest M.C. at The Silver Cloud

and the Cuban Village. "The Chicago Theater and the Oriental had vaudeville every week. I'd go down and steal jokes in the afternoon and use them in the club that night."[22] He did not always understand the jokes that he would read from the cards.

In addition to Fosse's professional career, Weaver taught Fosse to be creative and original. Fosse had been teaching the younger students at the Weaver Studio. In 1945, however, before he went off to war, he choreographed his first big number for a recital. It was a fan dance done to Porter's "That Old Black Magic" and involved five or six girls.[23]

After graduating from high school, Fosse enlisted in the navy. The three elder Fosse boys were already in the services; Cyril K., Jr. was in the seabees, usually in a dangerous area; Ed was in the infantry in Europe; so these two brothers "wrote to the Great Lakes Training Center and told them about Bob's experience as an entertainer and hoping they would get him entertainment work and he wouldn't have to go where the fighting was."[24] Thus, Fosse appeared on Griff Williams' weekly navy show in the Great Lakes area, Happy Hour. After his first appearance, Fosse was put into an entertainment unit comprised of thirteen men. His captain was Joseph Papp. Though the war had ended while he was in boot camp, he was sent overseas in this unit to the Pacific Islands.

The shows in which he performed were called Hook, Line and Sinker and Tough Situation. The shows were revues. Fosse danced and sang to "Fascinating Rhythm" and also performed in a comic routine with a stout Irish actor, in addition to being in other numbers. Papp remembers the young Fosse as "a great dancer, fast talker and totally earnest."[25] The unit rehearsed on the Johnston Islands which are southwest of Hawaii and it performed in Guam, Wake Island, Okinawa, and at the Ernie Pyle Theater in Tokyo. The unit was there primarily to entertain. Gwen Verdon noted: "However, there were still pockets of I guess it would be the Japanese that were on the islands so there would still be some hazards and all of those islands were murderously hot. So everyone in the middle of the afternoon was allowed to just either rest or get in the shade. I know Bob has told me that he practiced. He'd be out there on some kind of makeshift stage and he'd rehearse."[26]

When Fosse returned to the states, Grass was assistant choreographer for the Broadway show, Music in My Heart. Unfortunately, Grass suffered a leg injury which ended his professional career. Fosse was discharged in New York and resumed his hopes: "All I wanted to be in those days was to be another Fred Astaire."[27] When he was growing up, he would come home after a Fred Astaire film, dancing over fire plugs. "If life had just let me just dance

down the streets like Fred did, I don't think I would have ever gone into choreography."[28] Fosse's realization that he was not destined to become another Fred Astaire did not come, however, until he tried for seven years to become a star after returning home from the war.

In 1947, Fosse landed a chorus part in the national tour of Call Me Mister, a revue about military men trying to adjust to being civilians once again. It was only the second show for which Fosse had auditioned. He recreated Bill Callahan's Broadway role. In the first act opening number, Fosse played a marine in a skit with a sergeant, soldiers, sailors, and canteen girls. In the next number, "Going Home Train," he was one of several ex-GIs. In the fifth number, "The Army Way," he played a corporal. In the title number, Call Me Mister, he had a lead as a marine who was the soloist singer opposite Carl Reiner who played a floorwalker. Fosse was also in a few of the second act numbers. The second number of the second act was a dance specialty number and his partner was Mary Ann Niles.[29] Fosse was best remembered in the show for being "feather light of foot and spirits who whisks into civilian clothes in the show's theme song."[30] Fosse's elevations were electrifying to the audiences.

Shortly after they met, Fosse and Niles decided to get married. Niles claimed that they "had to get married or starve."[31] They waited until the tour was in Chicago

to be married so that Fosse's parents could attend the wedding. Fosse's brother Ed came up from his military post in Virginia to be best man. "They were married in a church on Michigan Avenue and after the reception, they went back to the performance on stage at the Blackstone Theatre."[32] While in Chicago, the cast, which included Buddy Hackett and Carl Reiner, were frequent visitors at Fosse's parents' home.

When the Fosses returned to New York, Mary Ann took Fosse to her dancing teacher, Francis Cole, with whom they studied ballet at 1697 Broadway in the Ed Sullivan Television Building. Fosse and Niles put together an act. Fosse took the numbers that Niles had done as singles and fixed them up for their act. At first they used only stock music but later they had bit arrangements made. Mary Ann Niles explained: "It was a second-hand Marge and Gower Champion but with more tap."[33] Marge and Gower Champion had introduced a new kind of dance act. Mary Ann Niles recalled: "It was different from the old acts like the DeMarcos, which we called patent leather show acts. You know, everybody was slicked down and had shiny shoes. Gower came in with a crew cut and blue eyes and changed the whole image."[34] When the clubs could not get the Champions, they hired Fosse and Niles. Their act was young and fresh. Maurice LaPeu at the William Morris Agency represented them.

One of their first engagements was at the Olympia in Miami, Florida in June 1948. Lary of Variety praised: "Tee offers Niles and Fosse are a fresh looking pair of terpers who set a stylish pact for the proceedings. Costumed tastefully and routined intelligently, they blend in straight taps, leaps and spins and a satirical twist on East Indian terpers for enthusiastic response."[35]

Within six months, Fosse and Niles were performing at the Hotel Pierre in New York which was impressive for that time. They were given a twelve-minute spot at the Hotel Pierre's Cotillion Room. Abel of Variety described: "Nice looking pair with expert terps doing their ballet and taps to consistently okay results. He's in a business suit, she in an informal dress sporting a bare midriff. Their routines embrace an East Indian takeoff, plus the conventional rhythm routines. Young and fresh looking, they bespeak of production promise following seasoning in class nighteries such as this."[36] They ended 1948 with an engagement at El Chico in New York.

The new year found them back on tour as the leading dancers in Make Mine Manhattan. By June, they were at the Palmer House in Chicago, sharing the bill with Sid Caesar for a few weeks. Zabe of Variety observed:

> Bob Fosse and Mary Ann Niles, youthful terp team should discard rather ordinary tap routine to 'Crazy Rhythm' as opener as the rest of the material

> they display seems fresh. Little bit of comedy in 'Showoff' stint garners chuckles but duo really starts selling with their East Indian hoke tap sharp travesty on the Jack Cole imitators. Satire on old vaude days at the Palace is close to the original with youngsters getting nifty reception for cakewalk.[37]

The East Indian satire that the reviewers kept referring to was a routine done to "Limehouse Blues." Originally, it was one of Niles' single tap numbers, and Fosse changed it. "He put drums in it and we did Oriental, East Indian kind of stuff in it. Very clever. People loved it. The lights would go down and here we were in tap shoes doing a shimmy and our heads would go side to side and doing the arms and then we would go back into tap,"[38] recalled Niles. Another routine was done to "Showoff," which Fosse would sing while Niles would waltz around him and then they would go into a softshoe.

Fosse and Niles made their Broadway debut in Dance Me a Song, January 1950, which was producer Dwight Deere Wiman's last Broadway show. In Act One, Scene Three, Fosse and Niles sang and danced to "It's the Weather." In Scene Thirteen, "Documentary," Fosse played a character named Dufo whose friend was played by Wally Cox. "The Old Folks at Home," in Act Two, Scene Three, gave Fosse a chance to play Harpo Marx. Fosse partnered Niles in Act Two, Scene Twenty-nine, "How Little Adam Knew." Fosse was Adam and Niles was Eve. Fosse and Niles were

were also in the Finale.[29]

Fosse and Niles received some mention in the show's reviews. Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times said, "There are any number of swift and likeable dancers--Mary Ann Niles, Bob Scherer, Cliff Ferrer and Bob Fosse to mention a few who do steps that are clearly impossible."[40] Kelcey Allen of Women's Wear Daily stated, ". . . the review has some adroit steppers in Fosse and Niles . . ."[41] Bron of Variety called Fosse an "ace dancer."[42] Additional praise for the show's dancers came from Rowland Field of the Newark Evening News. "The Revue's at its best during the dancing numbers involving Miss McCracken, Bob Scheerer, late of Lend An Ear, the agile team of Fosse and Niles, and a personable newcomer named Cliff Ferrer."[43] Unfortunately, in spite of a lively cast, it was a thin show and closed in five weeks. Also, the major recognition of the performers in the show went to Wally Cox and Joan McCracken. Fosse met McCracken in this show. Two years later, he would divorce Niles and marry McCracken.

Although not successful on Broadway, Fosse and Niles worked quite often on television. One of the first television programs they were on was The 54th Street Revue, in May 1949. They danced in a soft shoe number with Jack Sterling who hosted the show. The 54th Street Revue on CBS had stiff competition from the NBC Saturday Revue.

With their "slick dance routine,"[44] Fosse and Niles as regulars on the program, added to the popularity of the show. Some of the other television programs on which the duo appeared included the Toni Review, the Admiral Review, Your Show of Shows, and The Hit Parade. Fosse and Niles were the lead dancers on The Hit Parade, which featured the top seven songs of the week. If a song maintained its popularity, they would dance to the same music week after week with different costumes. Rose of Variety noted: "Tony Charmoli's choreography neatly complimented the terping of Fosse and Niles--in each instance a showmanly pictorialization of the tunes on display."[45]

By 1951, Fosse and Niles were back at the Hotel Pierre. Abel of Variety described:

> Back to Miss Darcel's Cotillion Room (Hotel Pierre) engagement, the returning Bob Fosse and Mary Niles are the show stoppers with unique terps. Fosse is definitely of the Astaire school, openly aping him with that cane routine (and so announced) while Miss Niles' semi-eccentric ballet mania is good contrast. The Mary Smith dancing school routine might be better developed into a kidding-on-the square exposition of what goes into the making of a professional terper. It could be a real dance of what makes for a finished terpsichorean product. As now, it is thrown away through underdevelopment. Their Palace-School song and dance vaudery is also good.[46]

A big break of television came along when Jerry Lewis asked Fosse and Niles to choreograph for the Colgate Comedy Hour. Martin and Lewis were the hosts once a month on the show. Niles had met them through her friend,

Sheila Bond, who had worked with them. Niles recalled:

> Bobby and I were at the Pierre. A good friend of mine was a good friend of Lew Brown who's still with Jerry Lewis and he told Jerry to go see us at the Pierre and Jerry came over. People don't like him but he's a marvelous person. And he stood up and he said, 'Bravo' and we went over to his table and he hugged and kissed me and I introduced him to Bobby and he said, 'I want you kids to choreograph my show.' Now, you know how young we were. He took a big chance, a big chance and we were thrilled.[47]

Fosse and Niles worked on about five shows before their personal differences separated them professionally as well as personally. One of the Colgate Comedy Hour shows was done in Chicago at the Chez Paree nightclub, where Martin and Lewis were headlining. Fosse used eight to twelve local male dancers for a big number. It was done in white tie and tails to one of the big Astaire numbers, "Putting on My Top Hat."[48]

In March 1951, Fosse danced without Niles at Monte Prosser's Cafe Theatre. He had a featured spot in a tab version of Billion Dollar Baby. He had a chance to read lines and dance solo; he also was partnered with Sheila Bond. Bond was a good friend of Niles' and recommended Fosse for the job. Jose of Variety observed:

> Bob Fosse, until recently, partnered with Mary Ann Niles, a team which played top hotel rooms and cafes as well as video, is now in business for himself. He's a dancer well schooled in modern techniques. He shows a ballet background and looks as though he'll make good on his own in most visual media. His debut as soloist at Monte Prosser's Cafe Theatre, New York,

> in a featured spot in the tab version of Billion Dollar Baby gives him a chance to show his proficiency at reading lines as well.
>
> Fosse, in this show, still dances in tandem. He's partnered with Sheila Bond and in his solo spots indicates that he has the necessary routines and savy to get along.[49]

After this presentation, Prosser decided to switch to a revue format in order to pay his performers AGVA minimum and thus reduce his costs. The next show there was The Roaring Twenties. Niles briefly rejoined Fosse for this show. "Bob Fosse and Mary Ann Niles who were reunited for this display are a lithe terp-twain who can similarly handle lines. Their solo and teamwork are of top calibre and their efforts are appreciated,"[50] praised Jose of Variety.

The Christmas season of 1951 found Fosse at the Roxy. Jose noted: "Bob Fosse (ex-Niles) does some decorative terping. It's too sophisticated for the trade that hits theatres during the holiday week but there are sufficient highlights to maintain interest. He's a skilled dancer in the modern idiom but his attempts at palaver are feeble."[51]

Fosse and Niles began the new year at the Waldorf Astoria. Fosse went solo after a week. "Fosse is a talented young hoofer with a fortune in musical comedy but his act as done here is out of sorts. He does some specialty hoofing for a starter that is the kind of stuff

for the mid-way mark with Fosse's apologetic acknowledgement of that spotting being no face-saver. This opener includes a medley of an East Indian bit, combined tango and paso doble and 'Old soft shoe.'"[52] Kahn of Variety continued, suggesting that Fosse should not try to become the next Gene Kelly by using Kelly's material, "Time of your Life," and "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." He wanted Fosse to "rely on new material to stress his own individuality. Otherwise he is a nifty hoofer, and he can handle talk as well, in addition to indicating a dramatic flair in 'Tenth Avenue.'"[53]

Fosse returned to Broadway to understudy Harold Lang in the 1952 revival of Pal Joey. Fosse later took the role on tour. He had played the role during the summer of 1951 opposite Carol Bruce in Falmouth.

On Tuesday, December 30, 1952, Fosse married Joan McCracken. "Joan was the biggest influence in my life," Fosse declared. "She was the one who changed it and gave it direction."[54] She encouraged him to study dancing, movement, acting, speech, and music. Fosse studied at the American Theatre Wing. His teachers included Sandy Meisner, Mira Rostova, Joe Anthony, and J. Edward Bromberg. For dance he studied with Anna Sokolow, Jose Limon and Charles Weidman. "Joan McCracken did introduce him to a lot of music and ballet and different kinds of dance so in a way he had a marvelous education, preliminary

education,"[55] remarked Gwen Verdon.

Shortly after Fosse and McCracken were married, Fosse went to Hollywood. Unfortunately, the movie musicals were in a state of decline at the time. Also, the work of the other better known stars in the films he did overshadowed his contributions. Fosse was in two films with Debbie Reynolds, The Affairs of Dobie Gillis and Give a Girl a Break. In the latter, which starred Marge and Gower Champion, he had two main numbers. The first was "In our United States." After taking Suzy, played by Reynolds, home after their first date, Fosse, whose character was named Bob Dowdy, strolled along the East River near the United Nations building. There was a romantic haze with topical lovers' talk which led into the number. The second number, "Nothing is Impossible," had Fosse discussing with Kurt Kaznar about having success in replacing the feminine star with a new girl. Nothing is impossible in show business. Thus, there was some attempt to integrate the musical numbers into the plot. The most important thing about Fosse doing this film was that it gave him a chance to work with Stanley Donen. Donen would later direct the film versions of Fosse's first two choreographic stage successes, Pajama Game and Damn Yankees. Arthur Knight of Saturday Review explained: "Perhaps because Donen was himself a dancer, he seems able to impart a rhythmic undercurrent to even the

expositional sequences of his film. His styling permits actors to burst into melody or slip into a dance without the jarring contrivance of a calculated song cue."[56] One of the outstanding qualities of Fosse's films in his rhythmic movement of the camera in nonmusical scenes.

The third film he was in that year was Kiss Me, Kate. The production was too opulent for Fosse's taste. In this film, he sang "From this Moment On," with Ann Miller, and "Tom, Dick and Harry," with Tommy Rall and Bobby Van. Fosse danced with Ann Miller, while she sang "Why Can't You Behave?" Fosse's one bit of glory occurred when Hermes Pan asked him to come up with a little dance for himself and Carol Haney. The dance was only forty-five seconds on film but was significant. The Saturday Review of Literature noted: ". . . and a young fellow by the name of Bob Fosse shows up brightly in the few moments that the camera lingers on him."[57] The following year when he was choreographing Pajama Game, he would remember working with Haney and bring her to Broadway.

The set of the film bothered Fosse. It was supposed to represent backstage of a theatre. The dressing rooms looked like posh hotel suites and the stage was a couple of city blocks long. Everything was beautiful and glossy. Fosse thought that the sets were all wrong. Fosse recalled, "The real backstage that I knew was a jungle."[58] Many years later Fosse would have a chance to change the

concept of the American musical on film. In the meantime, Fosse was content to buy his way out of his contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and return to New York.

By this point in his career, Fosse had realized that he would never become a star like Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire. Part of the problem was his physical build. His legs were too short, and there was something about his shoulders that limited his style. He danced hunched. Fosse admitted, "I just couldn't pick up anyone else's style. I was very limited as a dancer. I had to adjust everyone's work to fit my own body."[59] Even when he liked the way things looked, he just couldn't do them. Mary Ann Dimos noted: "Bobby is very much a perfectionist and he's disappointed when he doesn't do well. He is very understanding when someone else doesn't do well but he doesn't have that much generosity for himself. He was an exciting dancer. He does feel limited. He always has felt it but he can create so well and he can perform so well. He just has never met his own standards."[60] However, from his physical limitations, he was creative enough to develop his own personal style. Fosse remembered: "I had a great deal of trouble with turn-out and extension. To compensate for this, I used to work on the other areas, such as rhythm, style of movement, taking ordinary steps and giving them some extra twist or turn."[61]

So, throughout Fosse's childhood and for a few years as a young adult, Fosse tried to emulate those around him. From the vaudevillians, to the performers who worked with him to the stage and film stars, Fosse watched and learned. His formal training in Chicago with the Weavers and in New York with leading choreographers helped his natural talent to develop. For this first part of his career, that of a dancer, Fosse was not able to reach his goal of becoming a star.

He had garnered impressive dancing credits but other dancers overshadowed him on the dance floor and in reviews. There was always someone who was better and more versatile than he was such as Gower Champion, Gene Kelly, and Fred Astaire. Even Boddy Van and Tommy Rall received more notice. Fosse had a need, ever since he was a young child, to get attention, and he wasn't getting enough of it as a dancer. When the opportunity arose, with Pajama Game in 1954, he accepted the opportunity to become a choreographer. If he could not adapt to the style of choreographers, then he would have dancers adapt to his style.

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III. FOSSE AS CHOREOGRAPHER-DIRECTOR

Fosse has defined choreography thus:

> It's a form of writing. You have to write on your feet. It's different from a regular writer who has a typewriter and is off in a room with nobody watching over his shoulder. Choreography, or large parts of it anyhow, is done in front of people. Novelists and playwrights, they can go off and make their mistakes quietly, in private, and they can cross it out. A choreographer makes his mistakes publically with all the dancers looking at them.[1]

Until Fosse switched from being a dancer to a choreographer, he had believed the folklore that dancers become choreographers when their dancing days are over. But at twenty-six, Fosse became one of the youngest important Broadway choreographers and he still danced on occasion. He also had "less formal training than any choreographer around."[2]

Fosse's wife, at that time, Joan McCracken, had worked with George Abbott on Broadway in Me and Juliet and on television on the Hugh Martin Show. One of McCracken's best friends was Buzz Miller who had also danced with her in Me and Juliet. Miller, at Carol Haney's insistance, took Jerome Robbins to see Fosse's choreography in his brief segment in Kiss Me Kate. Robbins was making the step from choreographer to co-director. Since he could be around to back up Fosse, if

necessary, Robbins recommended Fosse to Abbott for The Pajama Game.

Fosse wasn't the only unknown working on The Pajama Game. The composer/lyricist team of Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, protegés of Frank Loesser, were making their Broadway musical comedy debut. Also, the members of the producing team were novices. Robert Griffith had been Abbott's stage manager for over twenty years and Harold Prince had recently joined Abbott in the same capacity. Griffith and Prince were joined by the veteran Frederick Brisson to produce their first Broadway show, The Pajama Game in 1954, which became a hit both financially and artistically.

The Pajama Game was adapted from Richard Bissell's novel, 7½ Cents. When no major musical comedy writer wanted to write the adaptation, Abbott finally decided to collaborate with Bissell. It was the subject of the novel, labor versus management in a pajama factory, with the threat of a strike, that scared everyone away. It even scared away the major theatrical investors. Eventually, 134 people invested small amounts to make a total of $169,000. Bissell and Abbott's libretto and a subsequent staging of it stayed within the accepted bounds of musical comedy. The production had a lot of motion, lightness and friskiness. "And that may also help to explain why Bob Fosse's ballets and improvised

dance turns seem to come so spontaneously out of the story,"[3] explained Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times. Fosse's choreography kept pace with the rest of the production. John McClain of the New York Journal American noted: "When the music might merely offer the opportunity for a pedestrian boy-girl number, the authors and choreographer have combined to endow it with particular styling and speed."[4]

Fosse choreographed five major dances for The Pajama Game: "Her Is," "Hernando's Hideaway," "Jealousy Ballet," "I'll Never Be Jealous Again," and the number that was to become his most famous, "Steam Heat." Because Fosse had thought of choreographers as being "rock bottom, he feared that if there was a pause in his creativity that other dancers would say he was 'rock bottom.'"[5] He worked in the studio for eight weeks before the dancers came in. He worked out every part of the dances on himself. Then, he taught the dancers the numbers in five days. If a dance didn't work, he would go on to the next one. He'd break for lunch and when the dancers returned, he'd redo the number that had been skipped.

Then Fosse ran into a problem when it came to staging the song "7½ Cents." Choreographing a song is different from staging it. Abbott recalled: "When rehearsals started, Fosse did excellent work on many of

the numbers, but later he needed help and Robbins was called in."[7] When Fosse came to the group number, "7½ Cents," he didn't know what to do, so he asked Abbott who said, "'Just have them stand there and sing.'"[8] So Fosse did just that. Robbins took over and in an hour-and-a-half, the number was effectively staged. Robbins had asked Fosse if he wanted to stay and help. Fosse didn't know if he could help but he wanted to stay and watch.

As with dancing, Fosse picked up staging quite easily. Fosse admitted, "'I did all of the dances but I failed in a couple of the songs and Jerry came in and staged them. Watching him was the greatest lesson I ever had. I think he's an absolute genius.'"[9] Fosse realized that staging a song was harder to do than choreographing a dance. However, he learned how to do it. "'You keep the actors moving--you try to get the sense of a lyric over--you never let the gesture interfere, and at the same time, you make an interesting picture but it's important that the lyric of the song is heard.'"[10]

Prior to the show's opening, The Daily News revealed Robbins' choreographic contribution. "Director Jerry Robbins has just created and inserted a ballet, '7½ Cents,' named after the book on which the show is written."[11] Quite graciously, Robbins denied having choreographed the number. "Giving credit, Jerry Robbins

refuted last week's report that he added a new ballet. 'I have been used as advisor, consultant and editor on that work as any director of a show would be, but have not done any of the dances.'"[12]

Fosse's style blended into the work of Robbins and Abbott and helped make The Pajama Game a success. Abe Laufe of Broadway's Greatest Musicals noted: "For his first venture into Broadway, choreographer Fosse devised whirl-wind routines that highlighted the action and helped maintain the fast pace set by Abbott and Robbins."[13] The producers returned ten per cent of the investors' money five days after the show opened. After fourteen weeks the entire investment was returned. Fosse's contribution to the show was praised by the critics. Richard Watts of the New York Post claimed, "It is in its dancing that The Pajama Game is at its most enlivening. There is no pretentiousness in the choreography of Bob Fosse and Jerome Robbins and they maintain the pseudo-realistic mood of the story with brightness and imagination."[14]

The one dancer in the show whom Fosse had requested was Carol Haney. Fosse had known her from having worked with her in the film, Kiss Me Kate, and knew that she was suited for The Pajama Game. Originally, Fosse envisioned her as ideal for the small role of a character named Poopsie, and planned to throw all the important

dancing to this part."[15] Though she was wilder than he, Fosse had realized from working with Haney that she had much of the same style as he had, i.e., humor and jazz. At first MGM refused to release her from her contract, so Abbott used his Pal Joey association with Gene Kelly to win her release. Though a Jack Cole dancer for several years, Haney was Kelly's assistant at the time. They were working on the film, Brigadoon. Since Abbott wouldn't guarantee her the part until he saw her act, she had to fly East, against Kelly's advice, at her own expense. After she read three lines, Abbott was convinced. Haney flew back to Hollywood to finish the film and returned to New York in time for rehearsals.

Though she had never sung or acted before, she did so well that Poopsie was combined with the role of the Boss's secretary, Gladys, to make Haney's part larger. After ten days of rehearsal, there was a run-through. It was at that time that the decision to enlarge Haney's part was made. That decision also helped to integrate the story-line with the musical numbers more effectively. "The dances by Bob Fosse (new to Broadway, but courtesy of MGM) are fast, funny where they ought to be, neatly dovetailed into a hard-driving book. Mr. Fosse had, furthermore worked out some amiable comic fantasies for an animated cartoon named Carol Haney,"[16] praised Walter Kerr of the New York Herald Tribune.

Haney helped Fosse's career along with her dazzling performance of "Hernando's Hideaway" and "Steam Heat." "The 'Hernando's Hideaway' sequence from The Pajama Game illustrates how dance combines with song to establish the atmospheric quality of a locale."[17] Sid, the superintendent of the Pajama Factory is on the side of the workers who have requested a 7½ cent raise. He knows that Gladys has the key to the safe containing the company's secret ledgers. Sid decides to take Gladys out in order to steal the key so he can examine the ledgers and prove that the company is making a greater profit than it claims and can afford to give the workers their raise. Janice Glann in her dissertation, "Assessment of functions of Dance in the Broadway Musical, described:

> Sid says he will take her anywhere she wishes. Gladys' reply is, 'I know this wonderful JOINT.' The scene segues into the next as Gladys sings 'Hernando's Hideaway', in which she describes the place. Throughout the song, she leads Sid in an exaggerated tango. When her portion of the song is completed, they dance off. Various characters then enter and perform a dance sequence which combines Spanish dancing with other activities. The dance functions to create a type of sly, shifty, and secretive quality among the participants. This sequence continues into the actual setting for Hernando's Hideaway, and the song picks up again. It is initially performed in blackout, with matches being lighted at various points in the number. By the time the song is completed, the Hideaway setting is revealed. The dance sections function, therefore in conjunction with the song lyrics to establish the atmospheric quality of the locale.[18]

On the other hand, "Steam Heat" was interpolated into the plot to give Haney and Fosse a chance to show off. Haney, as Gladys, performed "Steam Heat" as an entertainment at a union meeting. David Ewen in New Complete Book of the American Musical Theatre describes: "Dressed as a gamin, but in a derby and black tight fitting suit--and flanked by two men similarly dressed--she performs a routine accompanied by hissing and vocal sounds."[19] Buzz Miller recalled, "Fosse had indeed, as usual, spent many weeks working alone on this number. So he had many steps for us and we just said, 'uh, huh' or 'uh uh.' So if we loved it, we dove in and made it into our own. We didn't give him any steps but we edited it a lot. In other words, we loved what he was doing with it and we were right there bouncing off him. So he wrapped it up in two days' rehearsal."[20]

John Chapman of the Daily News led the critics in praising the number. "I will say that a song and dance number titled 'Steam Heat' in which Miss Haney is teamed with Buzz Miller and Peter Gennaro is one of the funniest and most artful turns I ever say on a stage."[21] Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times admired Haney for both her acting and dancing. "But in fact, she is a comic dancer of extraordinary versatility. Shaggy-haired and gamin-like, she suits the mode of the season except that

she substitutes caricature for glamour. Her burlesque striptease for a funny number called 'Her Is' is effortless and convulsing. With Buzz Miller and Peter Gennaro, she introduces the second act with a swift high pressure vaudeville that is terrific. Both as dancer and actress, Miss Haney is superb."[22] "Steam Heat" established the Fosse trademark of pelvic thrust, backward lean, supercool manner and derby. "Fosse's basic dance is the pelvic bump, doubtless recalled from his adolescence as a dancer in burlesque shows. Also the marked sexuality."[23] The number included neatly syncopated torso convulsions, facial grimaces, lift of eyebrows and the tapping of hats. "Steam Heat," uncommon for its intimacy was a type of dance that Fosse was successfully to employ again. It was the same type as "Who's Got the Pain?" in Damn Yankees; "Mu Cha-Cha," in Bells Are Ringing, and "Uncle Sam's Rag," in Redhead.

"All of his dances have unrestrained whimsy and a subtle sense of rhythm,"[24] claimed Frances Herridge of the New York Post. One way Fosse accomplishes this is through the constant use of isolations. He claims that he uses isolations a lot because he's fond of them. "'It's amazing how few dancers are adept at it. You know when they move a shoulder, somehow the knee goes with it. It's very hard to get people just to do the shoulder.'"[25]

Another strength of Fosse's choreography was brought out in this show. It was his ability to heighten ordinary movement and everyday routines to make them into effective dramatic dance numbers. Paul Affelder of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle considered this ability to be Fosse's most important one:

> For us, however, Mr. Fosse has achieved his greatest choreographic success in two numbers requiring much more complicated engineering. One is the opening scene in the pajama factory where the fine counterpoint of the chorus 'Racing with the clock,' by musicians Richard Adler and Jerry Ross is carried out in a clever counterpoint on novement based entirely on the customary activities on a factory production line. The other spot is the union picnic scene, 'Once a Year Day.' where various games and simple dances like the polka intertwined in a fascinating series of patterns.[26]

Fosse has always been intrigued by the mathematics of patterns. Balanchine was the choreographer that Fosse admired the most because of his interesting and intriguing patterns. Fosse used to go often to the ballet and watch Balanchine's work. Doing so gave Fosse an inferiority complex he said, so later in his career he attempted to achieve this sort of intricate patterning in his choreography.

The success of Pajama Game left Fosse with mixed feelings. On the one hand, he was flattered and pleased with the praise from the critics. He also was happy to have won a Donaldson Award and his first Antoinette

Perry Award. On the other hand, he was disappointed that he was no longer dancing and was apprehensive about his future. "'I'm confused,' he says. I really want to dance or act myself. I went so hard at this show, I feel dried up. I was so afraid I wouldn't have an idea at rehearsals that I worked out everything in advance. I knocked myself out dancing every part myself.'"[27]

The successful team of Brisson, Griffith, and Prince asked Abbott to direct and Fosse to choreograph their next venture, Damn Yankees. Once again, it was a musical adapted from a book, and Abbott co-authored the libretto with Douglas Wallop. Adler and Ross were chosen once again to write the lyrics and music.

The first choice for the female lead was Mitzi Gaynor but she turned it down as did Zizi Jeanmaire. Gwen Verdon, however, fresh from her triumph in Can-Can, accepted the part of Lola. Lola had sold her soul to the devil in order to change from the town's ugliest woman to the most beautiful. She was assisting the devil. The devil had won Joe Hardy's soul in exchange for the Washington Senators winning the pennant. The devil had turned Joe into a youthful ball player with great playing ability. Joe was, however, homesick for his wife. Thus, Lola's job was to seduce Joe and help the devil keep Joe's soul. Verdon was in four of the show's five main dances. She was featured in "A Little

Talent," "Whatever Lola Wants," "Two Lost Souls," and "Who's Got the Pain." The other major dance was "Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo."

On March 7, 1955, intensive rehearsals were started. By March 20, a runthrough on a bare stage was held. Two songs were cut, lines were deleted, and dances rearranged. Ten days later, the show continued rehearsing in New Haven. The cast rehearsed in three groups, actors, singers, and dancers on three floors of the Schumer theatrical warehouse. After the first night in New Haven on April 2, two sets, three songs and the biggest ballet were eliminated. The number in which the baseball manager of the Senators tried to instill some spirit into his losing team. "You Gotta Have Heart," was built up and Verdon was given two songs and a new role. Her role also, was made more sympathetic.

Fosse had heard that Verdon was very temperamental "'So I walked in with the big 'Whatever Lola Wants' number blocked out to the smallest gesture,' recalls Fosse, 'and did my best to act as debonair as Fred Astaire.'"[28] Verdon accepted the number. Like Carol Haney, Verdon was a commedienne/actress as well as a dancer. "Topping her Can-Can triumph, she dances superbly--never more so than when she spoofs: she slinks and invites and caresses, kicks up her heels, swings her legs, coils and uncoils her hips, sends garments

flying--all the while singing such ditties as 'Whatever Lola Wants. . . Lola Gets.' She wears a double crown: no one can make sex more humorous,"[29] praised Time. Applegate, the devil, had brought Lola, posing as a fan, into the locker-room to meet Joe. As she talked to him about going out with her, he talks about his training. She then went into "Whatever Lola Wants" which was "virtually a striptease intended to awaken the sense of the heroic ball player to her allure."[30]

Verdon performed so effortlessly that many of the critics neglected to mention Fosse, while abundantly praising Verdon. "As she prances mockingly through a seduction scene, flipping a black glove over her shoulder as her hips go into mysterious but extremely interesting action, beating the floor idiotically with whatever clothing she has removed, coiling all over a locker-room bench while batting absurd eyelashes at her terrified victim, she is simply and insanely inspired,"[31] admired Walter Kerr. Thinking back on why she, the dancer, rather than Fosse, the choreographer, usually received the credit, Verdon recalled, "That happens because of the way Bob choreographs for a person. It looks like they invented it. People used to think that I just went out and sort of whatever came to mind at that performance of 'Lola,' did it. That number was choreographed down to when I would push my hair back."[32]

Fosse had been rehearsing a dance number for the first act finale for five weeks. It was "based on the game of musical chairs and it showed how rival ball teams dropped out of the running one by one."[33] The number was dropped at a loss of five thousand dollars because it slowed the show. In only a few days, Fosse created a substitute dance. This time only Verdon and Eddie Phillips were in it. They did a burlesque mambo to "Who's Got the Pain?" Just as "Steam Heat" had been performed as an entertainment at a union meeting, "Who's Got The Pain?" was inserted as an entertainment by the I Love Joe Fan Club at an evening of tribute to Joe. John Chapman stated, "I didn't think any dance director could ever equal Fosse's Steam Heat dance in The Pajama Game, a novelty number but he--with Gwen Verdon's collaboration--has come up with another gem in 'Who's Got the Pain,' which is danced by the glamorous Gwen Verdon and Eddie Phillips. Other Verdon song and dance numbers which are far above the ordinary are 'A little Brains, A Little Talent,' and 'Whatever Lola Wants.'"[34]

Lola's song and dance numbers clearly delineated her character as well as entertained the audience. From "Whatever Lola Wants" to "a leftfield ratrace called 'Who's Got the Pain,' in a baby-talk bit about her brains and her talent, in a rueful little duet labeled 'Two Lost Souls'--she is everything undesireable, made

made absolutely and forever desireable."[35]

Damn Yankees was the first successful musical comedy about baseball. It succeeded because of its satirical emphasis on human sexual temptation as well as on baseball. "Mr. Fosse, with Miss Verdon, is one of the evening's heroes. His dance numbers are full of fun and vitality. In 'Whatever Lola Wants' there is a first-class gem in which music, lyrics and dance combine to make a memorable episode of the 'femme fatale' operating on the hapless male. 'Who's Got the Pain' involves Miss Verdon and Eddie Phillips in a mambo and 'Two Lost Souls' puts on a torrid and rowdy bacchanal just to prove everyone's versatility,"[36] praised Lewis Funke of The New York Times.

After praising Verdon, the critics showered praise on the "Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo." number. Joe had gone with Applegate to get on the Senator's team. Because of his transformation from middle-age to youth, his feet had changed and he had to borrow a pair of shoes from another player. When manager Van Beuren wanted to put Joe into the minors for a season, Joe, with Applegate's special help, hit the ball six hundred feet. A newspaper reporter, who had been watching the whole episode, wanted to know why Joe hadn't worn the shoes he came in with. Joe told her that his feet must have swollen because of the excitement and made his shoes too

tight. The reporter, Gloria, decided that she was going to make Joe famous. The team wanted to know how she planned to accomplish that and she began, "Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo." and the team joined in the number. William Hawkins of the New York World-Telegram acclaimed: "The dancing of Bob Fosse is first rate. Miss Verdon's treatment of 'Lola!' and the impish mambo, are both masterpieces of understatement and wicked humor. Go see the most glamorous woman on the local stage make wild and expert fun of everything she appears to be. The baseball team's dance to 'Shoeless Joe' is a delightful account of success on the field, cocky, blase and ingenious."[37]

"Shoeless Joe" was the big number in the first act and ended with the baseball players hitting the dirt toward the footlights. On opening night, it received an ovation. "And 'Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo.,' sets the stage for a splendid hoedown for Robert Fosse who attended to the choreography."[38] This was the one dance number without Verdon: It was received just as well by the audience and critics as her numbers were. It was an ensemble number in which Fosse used the movements of actual baseball players in his choreography. Murray Schumach of The New York Times described: ". . . with the hoedown rhythm dictated by the music, he worked in the motions of batting, pitching, fielding and sliding

and tossed in a sort of juggling act with baseball bats."[39] The critics were impressed by the novelty of this number. "Bob Fosse has devised intriguing and ingenious choreography. The ballet of the ball players which stimulates their athletic and muscular patterns of moving and their gyrations is an extraordinary contribution to the season's best dancing. The company is superb in their hoedown to the tune of the catchy 'Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo.,'"[40] commended Thomas Dash of Women's Wear Daily.

Dancer Sheila Bond replaced Verdon in Damn Yankees for a few weeks. Since she had a strong ballet background, she changed the numbers around a bit to accommodate her style. Looking back, she thinks that "Damn Yankees was one of the most brilliant choreographic jobs that I have ever seen. It was excellent. Verdon was at the peak of her career and Fosse's dances at that time were different and new and vibrant."[41] Bond remembered, "He was marvelous at putting bits and pieces together."[42] Though Bond appreciates Verdon's great talent, she feels that Fosse would have still had a distinguished career without her. "He's a very determined man. He would have learned from everybody he would have met."[43]

Though Fosse's collaboration with Verdon on five successful shows helped to develop and advance both of

their careers, Fosse was just as capable when he worked on projects without Verdon. Verdon had a lot of faith in Fosse from the beginning, not only in his choreography for her, but in his ability in general. She never strongly disagreed with him about a number until the last show she starred in for him, Chicago, twenty years after Damn Yankees, and then Fosse gave in to her. Occasionally, when Fosse was only in the "talking stage," about a dance, Verdon would disagree with him about a dance but never strongly. She "would always go along with Bob and let him choreograph it and by that time, I loved it."[44] Verdon could be more objective than Fosse about numbers that weren't for her. When Fosse wanted to give up numbers because he decided that they were no good and Verdon knew that they were good--she would convince him to use the numbers.

After Damn Yankees, Fosse returned to Hollywood to choreograph and act in the film, My Sister Eileen. The play of that title had been made into a successful Broadway musical, Wonderful Town, with a score by Leonard Bernstein. Since Columbia Pictures had already filmed the Broadway dramatic version of My Sister Eileen, they decided, however, to refilm the play to save expenses and put in a new score by Jule Styne. Fosse played the role of Frank Lippencott, a soda-fountain manager, who was one of Eileen's boyfriends. Fosse's rival for

Eileen's affection was played by Tommy Rall. Both Fosse's dancing and his choreography for the film were praised by the critics. Newsweek claimed, "Most of the dancing is done by Robert Fosse and Tommy Rall and their dancing has a degree of excellence that is growing rare."[45] Lee Rogow, of the Saturday Review in quoting the major virtues of the film included ". . . dance numbers by Bob Fosse which are in the simple, impish underproduced tradition of the in-between numbers of the early Astaire-Rogers films."[46]

Derek Prouse, of Sight and Sound, thought that the numbers were excellently staged:

> Firstly there is a dance by Eileen's two rivals built up amusingly of neat dance feats as each tries to outdo the other. That fascinating miracle occurs when players who have until then seemed only adequate as actors, assumed authority as their true talent as dancers comes into play. The film's best number is also wonderfully, wittily choreographed by Robert Fosse. Enchantingly danced by the four principals on a park bandstand, it is conceived with rich invention to a Dixieland score and infectuously sung by Betty Garrett in 'Mammy Style.'[47]

Don Miller, of Films in Review, also praised the staging of the musical numbers and the challenge-dance between Fosse and Rall. He also credited the director, Richard Quine, for his contribution in bringing the dances to life. "Quine's continuity is smooth, the performers please; the musical numbers are well staged, specially a challenge dance between Bob Fosse and Tommy Rall. The former

created the dances for this film musical and in doing so repeated ideas he used in the stage musicals Damn Yankees and Pajama Game. But Quine's handling of them makes them seem fresh and creative."[48]

After completion of the film, Fosse returned to New York in time to help Jerome Robbins who was directing and choreographing Bells Are Ringing for the Theater Guild. The star of the production was July Holliday, making her musical comedy debut. Dancer Buzz Miller recalled: "Robbins would make her nervous. It was her personality type. Robbins was fairly new in directing and he really didn't know his acting that well and naturally he was defensive and she did know her acting."[49] So Fosse was called in to help out. "To cool down the controversy, the Theater Guild asked Fosse to step in and stage the remaining musical numbers."[50] The two major numbers that Fosse worked on with Holliday were "Mu Cha Cha," and "Drop That Name."

Fosse, who had gotten used to working with some of the most talented dancers on Broadway, now had the challenge of choreographing for Holliday, a non-dancer. Fosse evaluated Holliday's dancing ability, "'The late Judy Holliday really had no feeling for dance whatever!'"[51] However, he staged a big dance number, "Mu Cha Cha," for her and it worked successfully in the show. The song and dance segment, "Mu Cha Cha," used the

cha-cha as simple adornment of the scene.

Ella, played by Holliday, was at the switchboard, working at her job at Susanswerphone. She was dressed for her date that evening in a ball gown. She thought that she was going to the swanky Pyramid Club. Her friends came by and looked at her. One of them lent her a purse. Another lent her a handkerchief. Her friend, Carl, was chagrinned because he had nothing to give to her. So he decided to give her a cha-cha lesson. Ella told him that she could mambo. Carl insisted that it was not the same thing. He told Ella, "You're dead if you can't cha-cha! Free lesson! Look!"[52] They then began beating out a cha-cha rhythm which lead into the song and dance. Their friends join in and an ensemble dance number completed the scene. When the next scene opened, Ella and her date, Jeff, played by Sidney Chaplin, were discovered on a bench in Central Park.

Janice Glann explained, "It is not important to Ella's character that she learns the cha-cha. The dance functions only as a means of adornment and serve to highlight a special dance form."[53] John Chapman appreciated the embellishment of the basic ballroom steps. "Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse are deft with the dial, in staging Bells Are Ringing. The beauty of their choreography is that it's based on what every nightclub aficionado thinks he can do. And believe us, after a

visit to the Shubert, a lot of nitery habituees are going to have fun trying to duplicate their steps under the chilling eyes of the gay spot maitre d's."[54]

The other number Fosse worked on for Holliday was "Drop That Name." Holliday was the center of this ensemble number. It was devised as a parody on people who name drop at parties. Jeff, a writer, had taken Ella to an extravagant theatrical party for a star who was in from Hollywood. Ella felt out of place there. The butler told her, "Don't be so flustered, Miss. Just do what the others do. Just drop a name."[55] Since the musical numbers were not well integrated into the show, Brooks Atkinson considered it a vaudeville instead of a musical comedy.

1956 was a busy year for Fosse. His second project that year was choreographing the film version of The Pajama Game. He arrived in Hollywood with most of the stage performers late in the summer of 1956. The only major cast change was putting Doris Day in the part of Babe instead of Janice Paige, because Day was a better box-office draw. Stanley Donen co-directed the film with Abbott. "The Jealousy Ballet" was dropped from the film. The Pajama Game was reproduced on film primarily as a stage production. This method, had its advantages and disadvantages. Bosely Crowther of The New York Times explained: ". . . imitation has also imposed some

restraints that make for a tangible rigidity within the frame of a musical film. There is an unmistakable routine to the alternation of dialogue and songs of comedy scenes, and production numbers all of them coming on obvious cues."[56] Once a dance number was over, there would be dissolves into the office or the factory of the union hall. " Steam Heat" is an example of the way a number was done in the film as if it was being done on the Broadway stage. Fosse recalled, "'Aside from a little bit of business that was taken out of it, it was done exactly as we did in in the theatre.'"[57] The rationale was that the number, an entertainment for a union meeting was supposed to be presented on a stage. Thus, it was filmed from that point of view. Kenneth Gargaro in his dissertation, "The Work of Bob Fosse and the choreographer-directors in the translation of Musicals to the Screen" claimed: "'Steam Heat' loses power on screen from lack of camera involvement."[58] There had been a problem in filming the number. "Carol had bad knees and didn't know it and they were really afraid that she was going to collapse. She could hardly get through what we call those low knee things with the knees an inch off the floor, leaning backwards and sliding up. So they really pushed it through in kind of a hurry cause they were afraid that she was going to conk out. So they thought they had better do it as quickly as

possible,[59] remembered Buzz Miller.

The one number which really made use of the camera's involvement, was the picnic dance, "Once a Year Day." It was filmed on location in a park. ". . . Bob Fosse re-choreographed his original dance completely to involve more people and all that space you can cover with the camera."[60] Donen photographed the number in travelling shots in order to capture, "all the dynamism of the movements and at the same time, provided enough air around the performers to make their movements seem significant."[61] The movements of the dance are selected from those that might really occur at a picnic. Arthur Knight of Dance Magazine noted: "The space is explored by the dancers and Fosse demonstrates early in his career how to capture the spirit of a musical number. Dance steps mingle with forward rolls, stunts, chicken fights and physical challenges; the strenuous activity bounds off the screen. The feeling of the day is not absorbed by the park but instead reflects it."[62]

Just because a musical number leans toward realism does not mean that it cannot be innovative and creative. The realistic set added to the believability of the number without detracting from the theatricality of it. Kenneth Gargaro explained: "Most likely the combination again of the realistic park and the impromptu setting brought by the picnickers enables this number to gather

the needed resonance for believability. The expressive gesture is 'the freedom of the park in the spring' and it is reflected well in the decor."[63] As Edward Jablonski of Films in Review put it, "The pacing of The Pajama Game owes not a little to the choreography of Bob Fosse."[64] Thus, Fosse returned to New York more confident about his abilities as a choreographer.

New Girl in Town in 1957 was the next show produced by Prince, Griffith, and Brisson. This time, the number of investors was down to 52. It was the 75th show Abbott had directed. Fosse again was choreographer, and Verdon was the star. Jerry Ross had died of a lung ailment, however, so Bob Merrill wrote the lyrics and music. This was the last collaboration of these producers, director and choreographer. Because of what happened with this show, Fosse was led into becoming a choreographer-director.

Abbott had adapted the libretto from Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie. He backdated the story from 1921 to the turn-of-the-century to help romanticize it. Abbott had not wanted Verdon to star for she was a dancer and Abbott wanted to emphasize the libretto rather than the dancing. Verdon wanted an opportunity to show off the range of her acting ability, however. She and Fosse agreed with Abbott at the beginning that dance should be kept to a minimum. Verdon genuinely intended to show off

a different aspect of her talent in New Girl in Town. She read O'Neill in order to prepare. She tried to interpret what O'Neill meant to say through her characterization of Anna. She studied acting with Sandford Meisner. In order to learn how to gulp down whiskey for the opening scene of the show, she went to a bar. When she was not able to sing Anna's big number, "It's Good to Be Alive," she went to a vocal coach and was able to sing the song three weeks later. So Verdon was certainly prepared for and capable of keeping her dancing to a minimum in the show.

But as the show went into rehearsal, the decision to add more dancing was made for two reasons. First, dancing was used as a crutch. Anytime the script became boring or slow, a dance was added. The second reason was that the audience had come, as proven in tryouts, to see Verdon dance. Abbott realized, "During the tryout, you could literally feel the audience's disappointment when a scene did not lead into a dance for her. As a result, we had to keep adding dance numbers, to go against the nature of the play to satisfy the expectations aroused by our casting of it."[65] So, unlike, Pajama Game and Damn Yankees, dances in New Girl in Town were added whether they were motivated or not. Henry Hewes, of the Saturday Review catalogued these numbers:

> At the show's beginning the sailors and waterfront floosies break out in a rousing fandango and for no reason whatever. A couple of scenes later we have for no apparent purpose a catchy barroom parody,"Oh, the Sunshine Girl Has Raindrops in Her Eyes," which allows dancer Eddie Phillips to break up the joint with a jazzy backroom romp. And equally non-pertinent though delightful is Bob Fosse's choreography of "At the Check Apron Ball," in which stylishly dressed beaux strut at a spanking gait in and out between their slowly parading ladies. The first-act curtain marks no dramatic crisis but merely cuts off in the middle of some energetic dancing.
>
> Act II commences amusingly by picking up the dancers in mid-kick right where they left off. And this is followed by a number titled, "Ven I Valse" in the 'Shall We Dance' tradition. Near the end of the show happy irrelevancy threatens to bust loose again in a number that satirizes the activities of the Sailors' Home.[66]

By the opening, Verdon was doing the jobs of four people. "If Gwen Verdon misses a performance as the star of New Girl in Town, the musical version of O'Neill's Anna Christie, four persons have to take her place: one plays the part and sings and three have to do three different dances."[67] Prior to opening, the producers had become panic stricken. To ease their anxiety about the production, they had Verdon "follow herself every two minutes in a new musical number, singing, dancing, turning increasingly the workhorse, bailing all of us out of a shared embarrassment. Mind you, she wanted the new material. She wanted new dances. She, too, had panicked,"[68] recalled Harold Prince. The additional dancing paid off. Richard Watts of The New York Post, reported, "There was a time last night when the

suspense of New Girl in Town seemed to consist of wondering how the libretto would manage to get Miss Verdon into her dancing. It required some doing, but, toward the end of the first act, it was arranged and there was cause for happiness."[69] Where Abbott had failed, Verdon aided by Fosse, had succeeded. Watts continued, "There is no more delightful dancer anywhere, for she can be at once graceful, lovely, humorous, exciting--it is impossible to write about Gwen Verdon without continual use of that word--and freshly imaginative,"[70]

New Girl in Town was a financial success. It was also an artistic success for Verdon and Fosse. While most reviewers believed that Abbott hadn't captured O'Neill's flavor and that the story existed only as an excuse to string the musical numbers together, they praised Verdon's dancing and acting ability and Fosse's choreography for its spirit and inventiveness. John McClain of the Journal American praised Fosse for having captured the early barrel-house beat of the times. "Fosse has given us what I believe to be the most brilliant and original choreography job of the year."[71] McClain continued with praise for Verdon, ". . . and when she dances, which she does frequently, she is the greatest. In 'There Ain't No Flies on Me,' 'Ven I Valse' and in the Second Act Ballet, she is utterly imcom-

parable."[72] He concluded, "Bob Fosse's choreography is easily the season's best: Fast, innovative and bang on the button."[73] Brooks Atkinson, of The New York Times, commended Fosse for having created "revelry when the musical comedy formula needs it. The dancing is sociable and antic."[74]

Fosse's objective was to always have Verdon look her best doing his choreography. Leo Lerman of Dance Magazine noted: "Mr. Fosse had devised vigorous pony-tail swinging numbers, sometimes with a strong balletic line to them, almost always accenting Miss Verdon's Highly stylized, peculiarly angular but most attractive manner."[75] As an ex-Cole dancer, Verdon recalled that she "had a lot of trouble doing Bob's work in the beginning all through Damn Yankees until New Girl in Town. Even in New Girl in Town, I was always getting the same notes which was 'Get out of plie.' I was always dancing with my knees bent because that was the way I danced with Jack Cole."[76]

Leo Lerman, like McClain agreed that Fosse's choreography was the best of the 1956-1957 Broadway season. He felt, however, that it didn't have the same substance as de Mille's choreography for Brigadoon. Lerman was also disappointed that the numbers weren't integrated. He recognized three key characteristics of Fosse's choreography. One was that Fosse used a variety

of dance styles in a show. In New Girl in Town, Lerman classified the forms as vaudeville dance, social dance and ballet. The cakewalk was the dance used most frequently in New Girl in Town. Secondly, Fosse was innovative. He could change an old standard dance form into something recognizable but yet different. Finally, Fosse was contemporary. He was current with what was happening in the world in order to give his dances the feeling of social comment. Leo Lerman noted: "He has a neat way of changing an old soft-shoe routine into a bright shiny new design. The show is turn-of-the-century. Save for the passages in his 'big' Act II ballet, Fosse manipulates within the period, artfully touching it with a '57 look. He's excellent at staging the numbers. How very tricky it is, this arranging movement for song numbers."[77] So in the area of staging in which he once needed help, Fosse had now become an expert.

Two of the most important Fosse numbers in New Girl in Town were "At the Check Apron Ball" and the "Second Act Dream Ballet." They were important for different reasons. Fosse used the whole stage in "At the Check Apron Ball." Gwen Verdon recalled, "At that time, there was still a dancing chorus and a singing chorus, male and female ensemble, and he would always try to get good singers who could move and the whole stage was dancing."[78]

Beginning with "Shoeless Joe" in Damn Yankees and continuing with "At the Check Apron Ball" Fosse proved that he had flexibility as a choreographer. His numbers were effective when they were intimate, for twos and threes, and just as effective when he used the whole stage for an ensemble number. Lerman described Fosse's range:

> Choreographically,the show ranges from the banal (a second act 'interpretive' dream-type ballet, with alarmingly Tudoresque sequences and a diligent employment of the lobsterscope, also a wonderful use of hissing and other sounds to one of the happiest numbers we've seen in a long time, "At the Check Apron Ball." The latter is performed right down in the footlights. And it moves with a swing and a sway lovely to behold. Fosse brings on his company in groups of anywhere from two to about eight strong. Sometimes a single dancer enters, but always the whole company moves right along until the drop flies and the plot makes a great big dead spot . . .[79]

The other important number in New Girl in Town was the controversial dream ballet in the second act. Prince and Abbott had their own version of the problem with the number, but Verdon gave another. Abbott claimed that during tryout "the cold, shocked reaction of the viewers made us realize that the sequence was just plain dirty."[80] The producers and Abbott wanted to take the number out but Fosse and Verdon fought to keep it in. To convince Fosse and Verdon, they "argued that the dream ballet was a device already worn threadbare by its frequent use on Broadway; that in any case the ballet was false because

it pictured the bordello in glamorous exciting terms whereas Anna Christie had nothing but loathing for her past; and finally, that the audience hated it."[81] Fosse and Verdon replied that the number was high art, but the number was still deleted. Verdon got sick and couldn't perform. Then Fosse asked for the privilege of creating another ballet to take the place of the dream ballet, and the producers agreed. Verdon recuperated. The new dance started off differently but ended with the same steps and postures. Abbott gave Fosse orders to work on the waltz but when Abbott dropped into rehearsal, he found Fosse rehearsing the ballet. "The outcome was a pale imitation of the original, still as out of place but inoffensive,"[82] recalled Harold Prince.

Verdon strongly disagrees that the ballet was out of place. "The ballet was truly extraordinary. Now, you have to remember it was 1959 and people were not nearly as open then about sexuality and eroticism and things. The ballet was fantastic."[83] It illustrated how dance serves to emphasize a basic attitude of the major character. Janice Glann explained:

> The ballet, which occurs at the time she is leaving, is one in which Anna recalls her experiences in the brothel. The ballet portrays her feeling of humiliation and disgust for this life, and ends by her seeking an escape from it. The attitude that is expressed and emphasized in the dance is one which is basic to Anna's character. She recognizes but is ashamed of and humiliated by her past, and is determined to find new meaning and happiness elsewhere.[84]

When the show opened in New Haven, one woman took her teenage daughter out of the theater, complaining to the doorman/guard. As she complained, Abbott, who happened to be standing there, overheard her. The show was closing in a couple of days. Nobody had said anything to Verdon about the number. After the show closed in New Haven. it went to Boston. There were lines at the theater, and Verdon went in for rehearsal. Verdon recalled her shock as she walked in the stage-door and Prince notified her, "'By the way, the ballet's out,' and I said, 'What do you mean out?' He said, 'It's been cut from the show.' I said, 'I think you'd better get Mr. Abbott. I want to speak to him.'"[85] Fosse told Verdon to be calm. Verdon asked Fosse if he had known about the removal of the number and he replied that he had "sort of" known about it but that it hadn't been made definite until the last couple of performances in New Haven. Ironically, people were coming from New Haven to see the show in Boston specifically to see that ballet. Harold Prince came back with Robert Griffith and Mr. Brisson and he said, Verdon remembered, "'Mr. Abbott is too busy to talk to you.' Well, I said, 'Fine, I'm too busy to rehearse,' and I started to leave the theater because that's a real insult. You don't do that to anybody. Not just because I was the lead in the show."[86]

Brisson, whom Verdon liked most of the three producers, told her, "'Mr. Abbott feels and we do that the ballet is pornographic and lewd.'"[87] Verdon couldn't believe it so she left the theater. Fosse was the one who finally convinced her to go on but not before Abbott had immediately begun rehearsing the understudies. Verdon was willing to leave the show because of the ballet. She claimed, "I could suffer horrendous reviews. I know I could if I believed in what I was doing."[88]

Finally, Abbott met with Verdon. The number would stay out on the condition that Fosse would be allowed to choreograph another ballet that would be acceptable. Fosse began rehearsing until three or four o'clock in the morning trying to come up with an idea. Verdon remembered, "Sometimes I would go in after the show and work with Bob. You know, just so he would have someone to try it. I can't remember when we opened in New York, but I did not have that ballet but, on June 23, which was a couple of months later and Bob's birthday, that ballet went back in, not exactly the same ballet, but I would say eighty percent of it was the same." The original number had been done with just drums and kettle drums and a standing bass fiddle to create the feeling of a pulse. The later version had instrumental music--including can-can music--set to parts of it. In addition, the movement of the dance was speeded up to become

almost acrobatic. Also, there had been a forty thousand dollar staircase in the original version. In Boston, a group of women went backstage and complained about the men carrying women up it. The stairway was chopped up and burned. Verdon in defense of artistic freedom remarked, "Now, of course, that's just like Hitler burning books. You just don't do things like that. You just don't do it."[89]

Though Fosse and Verdon never worked with the producing team of Prince, Griffith and Brisson again, they did go to Hollywood in 1958 to work on the film version of Damn Yankees. Once again, Donen co-directed with Abbott. Changes in the film version from the stage version were few. The baseball sequences were done outdoors in Wrigley field. There was a special technique used for materializing and dematerializing of Ray Walston, the devil. There was also a technique for transforming Tab Hunter, Joe Hardy, from middle age to youth, and Verdon from beautiful to ugly. Otherwise, the stage production was faithfully reproduced.

The "Shoeless Joe" number was the equivalent of the "Once a Year Day" number in Pajama Game. Arthur Knight noted: "But, unlike Pajama Game, the ball park locale affords a good deal of visual excitement and eliminates much of the boxed-in feeling that marred the earlier film. Not until the scene had shifted out to

the ball field, however and a locker-room quartet of unlikely-looking Senators strikes up with 'Ya Gotta Have Heart,' does the fun really get under way and then the prime mover becomes choreographer Bob Fosse."[90] The "Shoeless Joe" number becomes even more exciting than on a stage because it was done in a real baseball field which added scenic power. It was in this number according to Arthur Knight that:

> . . . the rousing, flawlessly executed hoe-down with which the Senators celebrate the fact that Tab Hunter has joined their ranks. Fosse turned out a series of intricate, eccentric steps, stumbles, somersaults and dives for about two dozen male dancers, all performing with incredible precision on the turf and dust of the infield. By his knowing use of the camera, Donen extracted from this dance material some tremendously exciting screen patterns. A wedge of dancers moves forward, and the camera is placed directly at the apex to capture the full force of Fosse's design. Or it moves in for a quick glimpse of the strutting players, then back as the whole line hits the dirt for a climax.[9]

Albert Johnson, of Sight and Sound, considered it to be "the highest moment of ensemble dancing seen recently in the film."[92]

Since "Who's Got the Pain?" was presented as a theatrical entertainment, it was photographed "out front" from the audience's point of view. Fosse cast himself to replace Eddie Phillips in this number. He danced the number with Verdon. Albert Johnson noted: "Gwen Verdon is essentially a dancer. Her chief ally in this field is Bob Fosse, who choreographed the routines and

who also appears with her in a mambo parody. Both artists are at their best in this rhythmic interlude, closely related to Fosse's earlier jazz-dance "Steam Heat," an isolated piece of virtuosity in The Pajama Game.[93] Saturday Review considered "Who's Got the Pain?" to be the best number in the film and was enamored of Verdon:

> No one can dance quite like her. This is because when she moves, she is an exquisite satirist. There isn't anything she does with her fantastically lithe body that is not both perfectly executed and funny. Incidentally, she's a fetching creature The best number in the movie (besides the famous "What Lola Wants, She Gets) is one called "Who's Got the Pain?" It has absolutely nothing to do with the plot, it's just a grotesquely fascinating inspiration of Bob Fosse's. He dances it with Miss Verdon, and it's a pity that he's one of the two or three most creative choreographers around: Otherwise we'd be able to see more of him as a dancer.[94]

The other dance numbers in the film worth noting for Fosse's choreographic collaboration with Donen's camera work was "Two Lost Souls." "Here Fosse had contrived a sort of jazz ballet filled with sinuous, slinky, tongue-in-cheek song movements--clever, inventive and vigorously executed by Miss Verdon, Tab Hunter, and a large chorus. But what ties it all together, pointing up its humor while preserving the line of the dance is Donen's no less inventive camera placements,"[95] noted Arthur Knight. After this film, Fosse left Hollywood for ten years. Verdon, strangely enough, after receiving wonderful reviews, never made another film.

Thus, during the five years 1954 to 1958, Fosse had choreographed three Broadway musical comedies, Pajama Game, Damn Yankees, and New Girl in Town and helped choreograph another one, Bells are Ringing. He also choreographed the film version of Pajama Game. Fosse had proven himself as a choreographer for popular entertainments. By the time he reached thirty, he had received two Tonys and a Donaldson Award.

"Fosse . . . is probably the person most responsible for the sleek sexy, ultra professional razzle-dazzle look which became virtually synonymous with the words Broadway Musical in the fifties and early sixties,"[96] claimed Roger Copeland of Dance Magazine. Fosse had been influenced by Jack Cole's style; by Cole's own choreography and Fosse's use of Cole dancers. Though Jack Cole was the first to bring overt sexuality to Broadway musical comedy dance, it became an important aspect of Fosse's style. Fosse's eroticism during this early period was mixed with humor. His leads could act as well as dance which added another dimension to his choreography. He was generous to his dancers and is also able to use movement to make even a virtual non-dancer like Judy Holiday look good. Buzz Miller explained, "He's one of the few people who can do a duet or solo for somebody without feeling . . . You know, Jerry Robbins tends to resent anybody who starts taking over the spot. It's

not conscious, but Fosse is wonderful about that. He will work very hard on, with, give everything to a soloist or duet or a group number. He's really wonderful to work with whereas Robbins is very difficult."[97]

Another aspect of Fosse's style was his ability to satirically comment on society. This he achieved in a couple of ways. One way is by his interpretation of social dances of the society in the musical. An example of this is the "Mu Cha-Cha" number in Bells Are Ringing. The other way is by the way he chooses and uses everyday movements and gestures in his choreography. The "Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo." number from Damn Yankees is an example. "Fosse's choreography made it perfectly clear that the Broadway musical had broken completely with the easy-going European operetta, reflecting instead the brassy, accelerated pace and noise level of urban life,"[98] explained Roger Copeland.

Though Fosse proved he could choreograph for ensemble numbers as well as for small groups, he had to learn how to stage numbers. This skill, he quickly picked up from Robbins on Pajama Game. As Abbott had directed Pajama Game, Damn Yankees and New Girl in Town, Fosse learned a lot from him. Abbott showed Fosse "how to whittle a script down to its basic events and keep the story moving; how to assort, vary and build the musical numbers to first-and second-act peaks; how

to direct book sequences; when to make use of dancing and when not to. Most of all, Abbott taught Fosse the basic facts of show-business life: that if a number isn't working, it must be dropped no matter how 'good' it is."[99]

Fosse learned to adapt and come up with new numbers when other numbers weren't working. He also was able to adapt his stage numbers in order to be more effective on film. The "Once a Year Day" number in Pajama Game and the "Shoeless Joe" number in Damn Yankees are examples. Kenneth Gargaro noted: "Fosse's flair and cinematic stylishness is indeed present in his early choreography (Damn Yankees, My Sister Eileen, Pajama Game), but it fails on the screen because the visual direction in the hand of his colleagues (Abbott, Donen, Quine) lacks the pictorial complement of his dynamic physical style."[100]

Fosse showed capability of utilizing all of the functions of dance; to further plot through exposition, progression or resolution; to show aspects of character such as attitude, point of view, or emotional response; to state the theme through satirical comment; to create atmosphere and mood and to embellish or exhibit particular talents of the performers.[101] He could integrate or interpolate dance numbers.

Fosse had been extremely lucky to have had such talented people, from whom to learn, surrounding him in

this early period. From the well established director Abbott and choreographer-director Robbins to the well trained dancers, Haney and Verdon, Fosse had been able to keep pace with them. Fosse had established himself as an important choreographer of the American musical theatre and of the American film musical.

NOTES

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[2] Frances Herridge, "Curtain Cues," New York Post, 28 May 1954, p. 32.

[3] Brooks Atkinson, "Theater in Review: Pajama Game," The New York Times, 14 May 1954, n. p.

[4] John McClain, "It's a Whale of a Show," New York Journal American, 14 May 1954.

[5] Glenn Loney, "The Many Facets of Bob Fosse," After Dark, June 1972, p. 24.

[6] Loney, p. 24.

[7] George Abbott, Mr. Abbott (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 249.

[8] Gaby Rogers, "Bob Fosse: 'Choreography is Writing with your Body,'" Newsday Magazine for Long Island, 1 Oct. 1978, n. p.

[9] Chris Chase, "Fosse, From Tony To Oscar to Emmy?" The New York Times, 29 April 1973, Section 2, p. 11.

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[11] Anonymous, Daily News, 23 April 1954, n. p.

[12] Anon., Daily News, 3 May 1954, n. p.

[13] Abe Laufe, Broadway's Greatest Musicals (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), p. 183.

[14] Richard Watts Jr., "Factory Life in a Musical Comedy," New York Post, 14 May 1954, n. p.

[15] George Abbott, "The Musicals Take Over," Theatre Arts, July 1954, p. 96.

[16] Walter Kerr, "'The Pajama Game,'" New York Herald Tribune, 14 May n. p.

[17] Janice Glann, "Assessment of Functions of Dance in the Broadway Musical," Diss. Bowling Green University, August 1976, p. 174.

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IV. FOSSE AS CHOREOGRAPHER-DIRECTOR

Fosse became a director-choreographer in self-defense. Fosse claimed, "I didn't like the way directors had the power to ruin my dances--or throw them out altogether."[1] Redhead was the first show that Fosse both directed and choreographed on Broadway. Verdon had asked for Fosse to choreograph and direct the show because by that time she had enough status to do so. Fosse had written much of the show. It had been his idea to add to the main murder mystery plot, a British musical-hall subplot in order to take advantage of Verdon's dancing talent. Verdon explained why she insisted on Fosse. "He knew the show so well and by that time, I'd worked with him so much that I'd really trusted him and I thought I could do a better job of it with Bob. Mostly I was scared. So it was a very selfish reason."[2]

One of the reasons that Verdon and Fosse collaborated so well is that Fosse's approach as a director is similar to his approach as a choreographer. Fosse gives his dancers images just as he gives his actors images. Verdon says that the images he gives for dance numbers are more flamboyant and funnier and more graphic than for acting. Some examples of the images he gives dancers

are ". . . a racehorse charging out of a starting gate, a baby bird flying for the first time, toothpaste coming out of a tube, somebody so oiled they could slip through a crack in the floor."[3] Fosse uses images to keep dancers fresh and to keep them from being purely technical.

Usually, Fosse holds three to four auditions for dancers. He looks for type, personality, ability to sing and act, desire and attitude about work. He interviews his dancers to find out their feelings about dance and life. Fosse has stated, "Desire means a great deal. You can tell when somebody is hungry to work, to get ahead. I look for that because my relationship with the dancers becomes a very close collaborative one; each party has to trust the other."[4]

In Redhead, there was still a separate category for dancers and singers. However, Fosse dancers had to be able to sing and his singers had to be able to dance. Above all, everyone on stage had to be able to act. One of Fosse's strengths is his ability to bring out the best in the people he works with. Verdon explained, "There is an expression, she couldn't act her way out of a paper bag. You know, I think Bob could get a paper bag to act. His imagery and his ability to learn so much about you as a human being that he knows how to reach you enables him to get you to act."[5]

It was Fosse's approach as a choreographer which

made it easy for him to accept the responsibility of director in Redhead. Leo Lerman, in Dance Magazine, analyzed Fosse's ability: "He has a very special talent for stage pictures, for keeping a show moving, for significant action detail which sums a situation up and makes it memorable."[6]

Redhead was the first Broadway musical murder mystery since Murder at the Vanities had been unsuccessfully produced in 1933. Redhead was produced by Robert Fryer and Lawrence Carr. Albert Hague composed the music, and Dorothy Fields wrote the lyrics. The libretto was written by Herbert and Dorothy Fields and Sidney Sheldon.

As with New Girl in Town, in Redhead, Verdon was on stage for almost a whole show. Also, as with Fosse's previous shows, in addition to the star's dance numbers, he choreographed one number without her to showcase his talent. The number in Redhead which Verdon was not in was "The Uncle Sam Rag." In Redhead, Verdon played Essie Whimple, a naive young redhead who worked in her aunt's wax museum in London. Essie met a music-hall performer, a strong man named Tom Baxter, whose partner had been murdered. The murderer also went after Essie. As Essie ran to Tom at the music-hall for help, a rehearsal was in progress. The number being rehearsed was "The Uncle Sam Rag."

Several critics compared this number to the "Ascot Gavotte" number in My Fair Lady which was also running on Broadway at the time. Henry Hewes of the Saturday Review described "The Uncle Sam Rag" as ". . . a number ridiculing the dignity with which a turn-of-the century British musical might have presented an uncultured Yankee Doodle-Ditty."[7] John Chapman of the Daily News expressed his approval of Fosse's work on Redhead. "Redhead has been staged by Bob Fosse, and Fosse has done a remarkably good job of keeping everything moving and keeping everybody dancing as much as possible. In the dance department, Fosse has great imagination and humor, whether he is staging a big number like 'The Uncle Sam Rag' or asking Miss Verdon to do an impish solo with only a man's glove for a prop."[8]

After "The Uncle Sam Rag," the dancing in the show focused on Verdon. Hewes recorded:

> From this point on, we merely await the show's next dance number as Miss Verdon heatedly works herself to the collapsing point for us again and again and again. There is her imitation of a Chaplinesque music-hall turn, which she executed in baggy pants: three lively versions of the same number that illustrate her dreams of being a musical-comedy star: a comedy first-act finale in which she does everything wrong to ruin a pretentiously overdecorated spectacle (amusingly costumed by Reuben Ter-Artunian): a bouncingly furious tavern dance and a comic tango. Add to this Miss Verdon's having to grind out a half-dozen songs and act her way stylishly and vigorously through the scenes in which she is either chasing Richard Kiley, or is being pursued by a mysterious strangler and you begin to

> get an idea of what must be the biggest sustained expenditure of controlled individual energy since Frank Merriwell won both the track meet and the baseball game for Yale on the same afternoon.[9]

Upon arrival at the rehearsal, Essie announced after "The Uncle Sam Rag" that the strangler was after her and that she needed a place to stay where she would be safe such as a place with lots of people around her. Tom wanted her to be put into the show so she could be protected. Essie liked that idea. She stated, "Oh yes, yes, I'll do a ditty Daddy did! I'll do a song and dance my Daddy made famous in all the music-halls . . ."[10] She then went into the song and dance "Erbie Fitch's Twitch" to show what she could do. Essie, who had come to the music-hall disguised as a man to throw the strangler off her track, performed this number in men's clothing, a bowler and a cane. Walter Kerr of The New York Times, described the appeal of the number and of Verdon:

> Bob Fosse keeps thinking up fetching postures, parades, chases and tailspins for her to dive unblinkingly into, and she dives--well magnificently. Gwen Verdon is a great entertainer. With her good right hip at a good right angle . . . and with one ankle cocked pertly into the crook of that cane, Miss Verdon struts, slithers, slips (with an enchantingly 'oops') and smiles her great uncertain smile until she has managed to bring down both of the houses she is playing in.[11]

At the end of Act One, there was a dream ballet called "Essie's Vision." This dream had nothing to do

with the plot, theme, atmosphere or Essie's character. The only purpose it served was to display Miss Verdon's talents. Verdon, as Essie, dreamed of being a successful leading lady and demonstrated her success in various shows through dances. During this number she performed six different dance forms including a can-can and a pas de deux from classical ballet. A critic for the Observer noticed, "Gwen Verdon makes no less than five costume changes within eight minutes, and the bouncing jiving ensemble uses trampolines, handsprings and cartwheels to leave the stage in a happy shambles."[12] After the dream, the action of the plot continued from where it left off before the dream.

One of the integrated numbers in the show was "The Pickpocket Tango." Fosse had to fight with the composer and orchestrator in order to get a five-piece band to play this number in order to achieve a "cheap rotten tango feeling."[13] This dance number was used to resolve a complication in the plot. Essie wanted to get away from a man, Sir Charles, who she thought was the killer; she bit the Police Captain's hand so he would put her in jail. Once in jail, Essie tried to escape. She snapped her fingers to get the attention of the other female inmates. After settling on a plan with them, Essie snapped her fingers to get the guard's attention. As Essie began talking to the guard, played by Buzz Miller,

the women snapped their fingers and Essie's body moved rhythmically. Inadvertently, the guard was lured into the dance, "The Pickpocket Tango." During the dance, Essie tried to pick the key to the jail cell out of the guard's pocket. While dancing, there was intermittent dialogue between Essie and the guard about her claimed Spanish background. Finally, Essie got the key, danced over and unlocked the cell. "She then rejoins the guard and as they dance together, the women dance out of their cell and tango off toward the exit snapping their fingers and shouting such things as 'Arriba' and 'Olé!' Meanwhile, Essie leads the guard close to the open cell door, spins him into the cell, closes and locks the door where the guard, unaware of what's happening, continues his rhythmic Iberian gyrations."[14] Then Essie danced off; the guard shouted, "Olé," and there was a blackout. Thus, Fosse very cleverly used the dance rather than the more commonly used dialogue or song to resolve a situation. McClain realized that Fosse had ". . . again come along with brilliant and original dance conceptions. All his numbers have a style all his own, happily divergent from the exaggerated zing of recent years . . . Miss Verdon may be required to engage in the contortions, but the dancing ensemble relies more on precision than the frantic scrimmage slides and half Nelsons in vogue elsewhere."[15]

An article in Theatre Arts recognized that as a

director, Fosse placed emphasis on movement rather than on dialogue or song:

> It is primarily Gwen Verdon's show and she is the real killer of the piece, book or no book. But it is also a dancing show, and the fine hand of Mr. Fosse is always evident, even when the business at hand is not strictly choreographic. Since he is primarily a dancer and choreographer, it is not surprising that as a director, he is a man who believes in motion. When the plot calls for the heroine, a waxworks apprentice, at the turn-of-the-century, to pay a visit to Scotland Yard, to report information on the mysterious strangler, Fosse bypasses the standard jokes about hawkshaw--bypasses Scotland Yard entirely, in fact--and makes the episode a memorable series of blackouts in the back alleys of London. When the strangler is on the lam late in the action, we get a burlesque version of the classic chase, with a wonderfully cluttered wax-works as the setting. A choreographer and dancer isn't concerned with the spoken word; consequently, pantomime plays a big part in underscoring everything in the plot--and there is plenty in this one.[16]

Redhead won two Antoinette Perry Awards. Fosse and Verdon were married during the run of the show. At the close of Redhead, Verdon went into retirement for five years, though she would assist Fosse backstage during that time.

In October 1959, Fosse did the staging and choreography for the ninety-minute television special The Wonderful World of Entertainment. It premiered the Ford Startime series. Rose of Variety credited Fosse's staging as one of the show's biggest virtues. "Combined with the knowing, glib scripting touch of Larry Gelbart, the producing of Jess Openheimer, Kirk Browning's direction

and the surefooted batoning and musical contribution of Harry Sosnick, such professionalism couldn't help but rub off on what the viewer saw."[17] The show was an excursion into all phases of entertainment since 1927. It was a fast-moving sequencing of song, dance, comedy, banter, and drama.

At the end of 1960, Fosse became involved as director-choreographer of The Conquering Hero. It was an adaptation by Larry Gelbart of the film, Hail, the Conquering Hero. Moose Charlap composed the music, and Norman Gimbel wrote the lyrics. The producers were Robert Whitehead and Roger Stevens. This was the only show from which Fosse was ever fired. Fosse considered being fired as the worst moment in his life. "I got the show together, I hired all of the actors, the ideas for the sets and costumes were mine and then, the first thing that goes wrong, they fire me!"[18] Dancer Richard Korthaze recalled:

> There were a few problems with the show itself, and the producers were getting a little uptight that things weren't being changed as quickly as they wanted them changed and Bobby was never one to make quick changes. He likes to see something work a little while, you know, a few performances before he decides whether it's good or bad or should be changed or how it would be changed. I think they just got a little nervous about it, particularly since he was directing and choreographing.[19]

Korthaze agreed that the major issue that Fosse was fired over was an anti-war ballet. The plot concerned

a young man returning home posing as a war hero, when in actuality, he had been discharged, after a month, by the marines because of his hay fever and had sat out the war in the United States. The anti-war dream ballet began with the hero's mother on the telephone telling her neighbors her version of how her son became a hero. In this particular number, Fosse had women playing the Japanese Army and men playing the American Army. Walter Kerr described the dance:

> The dance, as we fade through some transparent underbrush, is as fabulous as it ought to be. The Japanese are not only tricky foes to be tangling with; they are so confident that they have time to spin plates--the way they always used to spin plates at the Palace--on the tips of their bayonets. And the Americans, as we learn, are really 'different'--so different that they are free to spar, in blithe ballet grace, almost above the treetops. Nothing is labored here, the uncredited choreography is all very deadpan and all very funny, and 'The Conquering Hero' seems about to examine the subject of hero-worship with a splendidly malicious wink.[70]

The newspapers reported that Fosse had withdrawn as director of The Conquering Hero. The producers, Robert Whitehead and Roger Stevens, issued the statement that the withdrawal was over "a disagreement with them over the direction of the show's book."[21] An out-of-town review by Jay Carmody, of The Washington Evening Star, confirmed that there were problems with the book. He went so far as to state that the book looked unstudied. "This latter suggests that the director, Bob Fosse, a

dance designer and teacher with a genious touch, has been concentrating on his specialty at the expense of the other elements of the production. When it is dancing, which is rather more frequently than most musicals, 'The Conquering Hero' rises gaily above its other flaws including a rather routine score." Fosse had been fired before he could fix the book out-of-town. He had done work on the book with the author but Gelbart had taken exception to Fosse's suggestions. Fosse's stage manager, Phil Friedman, contended, "He wasn't communicating very well with the author. I think the author, who was Larry Gelbart, didn't take to all the things that Bob wanted. However, out-of-town, they were starting to work again on the book. The book was the main problem."[23]

The out-of-town critics were in agreement that the strength of the show was in the dances. Bob Leeney, in a telegram to Sam Zolotow, complained, "And except for the consistently imaginative, exciting, and humorous dances of Bob Fosse, this new musical comedy has not yet captured a firm sense of its own directions and goals."[24]

Fosse, in a telegram to Lewis Funke, reporter on The New York Times, stated that he considered the anti-war ballet and a campaign reaction dance number to have been his best work. When the show opened on Broadway, June, 1961, the critics agreed with Fosse's opinion even though Fosse's name had been taken off of the

program and some changes had been made in his original choreography by Todd Bolender. Arthur Todd of the Dance Observer noted, "Save for Mr. Bolender's listless staging of the first song number, all of the rest of the dances were by Robert Fosse and even if they had been cut to ribbons, they were the finest work that Mr. Fosse has done for Broadway."[25]

When two dance numbers were changed without his consent, Fosse went to the American Arbitration Society for assistance. Fosse's lawyer, Jack Pearlman, told Fosse that since the producers had failed to live up to their contractual obligation, Fosse could remove all of his dances from the show. However, Fosse felt that removing the dances would be destructive. Instead, Fosse sought a letter of guarantee from the producers promising the use of his dance routines in their original forms or no use of them at all. The producers refused to comply. Then, Fosse offered complete freedom in the use of his dances except for the two larger ballets. Again, the producers refused to comply. The matter was put into arbitration. By September 1961, Fosse had won the case by a unanimous decision and was awarded six cents. Fosse had asked only for six cents in order to vindicate his rights in the choreography.

In June, 1961, before his case in arbitration had been settled, Fosse returned to the stage as the star of

the City Center revival of Pal Joey. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Fosse had played the leading role in regional summer theater and had understudied Harold Lang in the Broadway revival. The 1961 production was directed by Gus Schirmer, Jr., who had directed Fosse in Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 1951. The production at City Center also starred Carol Bruce who had also played the same role in the 1951 production with Fosse. Fosse revealed his feelings about the part of Joey in a Dance Magazine article. ". . . even though I'm interested in what people say, I try to do what seems right to me . . . Joey is the corny show-business type, with a facade of arrogance that attempts to hide a boy who never grew up. He is narcissistic but amusing, childish but somehow charming--a poor lost guy. I keep finding new things in him . . . I'm trying not to baby my interpretation, not to play it safe."[26]

Understandably, the critics tried to evalute Fosse's performance in comparison with Gene Kelly's and Harold Lang's earlier performance of Joey. John Chapman of the Daily News, and Frank Aston, of the New York World-Telegram and Sun, agreed that Fosse's interpretation of Joey was the best one of the three. On the other hand, Judith Crist of the New York Herald Tribune thought that Fosse's interpretation was too sweet for the character. She felt that by injecting pathos, Fosse negated

the necessary feeling of indifference of the character. The rest of the critics admired Fosse's work. Richard Watts, of The New York Post, stated, "The title role demands, in addition to dancing skill, a difficult combination of cheapness and charm and Bob Fosse achieves it admirable."[27] John McClain, of the New York Journal American, chose Fosse's interpretation over Harold Lang's. "Bob Fosse is Joey this time out and he is first class--maybe not quite as acrobatic or roguish as Gene Kelly, the original, but certainly a better actor and more stylish dancer than Harold Lang, who played the revival."[28] Fosse's interpretation of Joey was not an attempt to imitate successful past Joeys. Fosse was able to successfully demonstrate his own interpretation of the part with skillful acting as well as dancing.

After a successful run, Pal Joey closed, and Fosse went on vacation. When he returned to New York, he was brought in to help out of How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying. Verdon went along to assist Fosse gratis on the show. Verdon explained why she was not given program credit. "He went in on that show and he did not have an assistant that he could bring in because Bob will only go in on a show if the choreographer who has done the show will remain. He won't sneak in. He never does anything sneaky and he will go and speak with the choreographer. But he needs an assistant who

has worked with him because there are shortcuts. You just know what he's going to do."[29] The original choreographer on the show was Hugh Lambert who had one number, a "Pirate Dance" which remained in the show. Though Fosse was given program credit for staging, he choreographed the end of the show. In addition, Fosse did a lot of the directing without receiving program credit. The credited director of the show was Abe Burrows who had also written the adaptation of the show, along with Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert. The book required a lot of rewriting. In addition, though Burrows handled directing small group scenes well, he had problems directing large group scenes. Verdon related, "The show won a Pulitzer Prize and when musicals win it, it's not just for the book. It's for the overall concept and the overall concept became really Bob's and Frank Loesser's."[30] Loesser was the composer-lyricist of the show. How to Succeed was produced by Feuer and Martin Productions and Frank Productions (Frank Loesser).

In How to Succeed, as with Bells Are Ringing, Fosse once again, had a non-dancing lead to work with. Bobby Morse, who played Pierpont Finch, was not a dancer but Fosse thought that he was fun to move onstage because he was athletic. "I build on what the performers are, who they are supposed to be, and what they have to do."[31] If the performers weren't well coordinated but very

willing and energetic, he could still do a lot with them.

Though Fosse doesn't think that there's a realistic musical, because singing takes a show beyond realism, he feels that some shows demand the illusion of reality on stage. Reality puts restrictions on fantasy and gimmicks and it's up to the director and choreographer to decide how far to push illusion. In How to Succeed, Fosse wanted to make everything seem like it was possible, even remotely. He wanted the people in the show to seem like people in an office. Thus, he removed some dance conventions, such as having people dancing on desks even though the style of the show was still exaggerated.

The show was a satire on various aspects of big business. In the production, Finch goes from being a window-washer to Chairman of the Board of World Wide Wickets by following a book. McClain praised the concept of the show. "It is the sheerest farce, down to the last paper clip, there isn't a smidgin of heart on the horizon, and honesty is consistently the worst policy. It is gay, zingy, amoral, witty and shot with style. It comes very close to being a new form in musicals."[32] Fosse used fixed poses as a way to focus attention, stop it, or underline it. He first got the idea of using it for the opening and then saw other places to use it so it became an overall look for the show. Abe Laufe in Broadway's Greatest Musicals explained how Fosse would

have ". . . the actors stand motionless, suddenly become animated for a moment or two and then freeze back into position. This way of depicting all workers as puppets was amusing, and the constant change in action and movement also quickened the tempo."[32] Sometimes Fosse would break the chorus line into small groups and have only two or three performers on stage at a time.

Fosse rehearsed the dance numbers for How to Succeed in an old Variety Arts Studio on West 46th Street. Fosse made an agreement with the producers to have a large studio where he could work alone without interference. Other people concerned with the production would see the dance numbers only after they had been completed. One day Loesser barged in on the "Coffee Break" number and yelled at Fosse because he had to watch the rehearsal through a keyhole. When the dance number was done, Loesser gave Fosse a pair of gold cuff links. The "Coffee Break" number was in the third scene of the first act. Girls entered the office and said good morning. Someone yelled, "Coffee Break!" Then someone else cried out, "There's No Coffee!" The employees began moving in a panicked reaction to the news. The lyric kept repeating that if the employees can't have coffee, "something in them dies." Fosse explained his approach to the number. "I took it to its extreme, treating coffee as if it were a drug--as though people needed a coffee

'fix!' The show was a cartoon anyway so careful exaggeration was in order for the dance."[34]

A few scenes later, scene six, there was a number called "A Secretary is Not a Toy." A new secretary had joined the company. Her measurements were 39-22-38. All of the men wanted her for their secretary. This number started as a waltz for the boss and men but it didn't look good. Other versions were tried without success. Finally it was made into a soft-shoe number with a syncopated beat, and Loesser thought it was terrific. Friedman, who again stage-managed, revealed how the number was put together. "As Bobby needed the lyrics, Frank Loesser was down in the men's room by a piano in the lounge writing the lyrics. Bobby would come down and tell him, 'I need two lines here,' and he'd get them dashed out and bring them up to the stage and then Bobby would start working on the number and the number was completed over the weekend on a Sunday and Monday in Philadelphia."[35] Another interesting aspect to the success of the number was that Feuer had ordered a whole set of costumes for it. The number didn't work the first time it was done because the costumes were too elaborate. After taking a $5,000 loss on the costumes and reverting to clothes worn earlier in the show, the number was successful.

In the second act, Finch expressed his self-

confidence in the number, "I Believe in You!" which was sung in the executive washroom. As several of Finch's fellow employees, victims of Finch's climb to the top, planned his undoing, Finch sat by an invisible mirror in the center as he sang to his own face. "Gotta stop that man, or he'll stop me," was the underbeat of the lyrics of the others. In "I Believe in You" the orchestra imitated electric razors while the executives went through the motions of shaving. The rhythmic shaving of the men was performed as a mirror exercise. At the end of the show, Rosemary, a secretary who had fallen in love with Finch, and he with her, sang, "I Believe in You" to Finch as an affirmation of her love.

When How to Succeed closed in 1965, it was the sixth longest-running show in Broadway history. Fosse won another Tony for it. McClain claimed that the numbers under Fosse's direction, with special credit given to Hugh Lambert, were ". . . a whole new chapter in ingenuity. You have never seen anything like 'Coffee Break,' or 'A Secretary is Not a Toy,' 'I Believe in You' or 'The Yo Ho Ho.' In most of these, people jiggle on and off in little groups, the beats are small and fast, building to a story climax when the stage is filled for the finish, and the audience screams."[35]

After completing work on How to Succeed, Fosse added another skill to his growing list, that of producer.

On October 22, 1961, Fosse produced, directed, choreographed and danced on a Timex special on television, The Seasons of Youth. The show featured Barrie Chase. The most rewarding moments of the show were a calypso number performed by Chase. Ann Barzel of Dance Magazine described these numbers. "The jazz dance he created had the zing of youth as he and Miss Chase in slacks, black shirts and straw hats cavorted happily to 'Don't Think I'll End It All Today.' Fosse also presented Miss Chase to fine advantage in an 'audition' number that gave her a chance to show her versatility at the ballet barre, in a can-can and in a Spanish Dance."[37]

Fosse returned to Broadway in 1962 to co-direct and stage the musical numbers and dances in Little Me. Little Me was based on Patrick Dennis' novel, The Autobiography of Belle Poitrine and was adapted for the musical stage by Neil Simon. Cy Coleman was the composer; Carolyn Leigh was the lyricist. This was Fosse's second experience working with the producers Feuer and Martin. Cy Feuer was Fosse's co-director. Before Fosse would sign his contract, he held out until the producers' negotiating agents agreed to sign with the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. The Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSDC) had been formed three years earlier by producer-director Shephard Traube in order to protect directors and choreographers

from breach of contract, including having fees and royalties withheld and cut. The League of New York Theaters had voted against recognizing the SSDC. "The breakthrough came in August 1962, when the firm of Feuer and Martin signed with SSDC in order to conclude a contract with Robert Fosse and director-choreographer of Little Me."[38]

Unlike the other shows Fosse had worked on, Little Me used the device of flashback. Little Me told the story of Belle Poitrine's life. The musical began with Belle, a successful movie-star dictating her memoirs to Patrick Dennis. The musical then reverted to 1916 and showed Belle as a teenager. Various episodes of her life were shown and the musical ended with Belle, the star, celebrating Christmas Eve with her friends in her mansion. The role of Belle was divided between two actresses. Virginia Martin played the younger Belle; and Nancy Andrews, the older Belle.

Although the plot centered on Belle's life, the real star of the show was the men in her life. This was because seven of the men in her life were played by one man, Sid Caesar. Caesar's work in television established him "as one of television's most original and versatile comics, inimitable in presenting a varied assortment of odd characters, pointing up their unique little foibles, mannerisms, idiosyncrasies and accents. With Caesar

returning to the Broadway stage after an absence of fourteen years--and now a celebrity--he could be expected to be given a vehicle taking advantage of his talent for portraying amusing and unusual characters."[39]

For Caesar there was less pressure working on Broadway than there had been working in television. Caesar had been used to being involved in a large part of the decision making process for his television program. Caesar continued making demands during the rehearsals of Little Me. A Newsweek article revealed that Caesar's ideas on comedy also frequently clashed with those of the co-directors Cy Feuer and Bob Fosse, perfectionists with ideas of their own. Newsweek related, "Two weeks before a Philadelphia opening, the three principals sat down for a council of war. The result was a truce: Caesar would improvise during rehearsals, and what everybody liked would be written in. In the long run, a fair number of Caesar's suggestions were accepted."[40] Fosse stated that Caesar was usually right about what he wanted done. For example, during a rehearsal, Caesar would step down to the edge of the stage, and make a suggestion to the directors. "You got a big joke coming up here. All we need is a little stuff to lead up to it."[41] The directors then would take notes and add the material later.

Even though Fosse and Feuer made concessions

to Caesar, Caesar was made aware of his responsibilities. Feuer explained, "A comedy talent like Sid's has to feel comfortable. If he doesn't feel right, there's bound to be a strain. We work around him, of course, but he knows that every word has to be spoken as rehearsed. One word might be a light cue, another an orchestra cue. Spoken in the wrong place, it could mean chaos."[42] Also, cues were important for set changes. None of the sets was re-used in the show and the second act had seventeen sets.

Friedman, again stage-managing, explained, "I had a list of exactly every single thing in the show that Bobby was going to do and that Feuer was going to do, so there was an agreement before rehearsals so that they wouldn't go into each other's areas of work. Bobby was going to do, and did, all of the lead-in scenes to his numbers which normally would have been a book director's work."[43]

Fosse and Feuer would take time during rehearsals to get their desired effects. Fosse, especially, worked on the principal of trial and error. He tried to do everything that came to him and then edited it. The music was so integrated with the story that there was a lot of overlapping of duties. For example, at rehearsal, during one scene, Fosse and Feuer were alternately shouting orders. Richard and Betsy Gehman noted in their Theatre Arts article, "A single word is tried in five separate

places until the right spot is decided upon. A song cue is rehearsed seven times."[44]

There were six main dance numbers in the show. The first, "Dimples," was a chase spoof of the silent films. Another number, "Boom, Boom," was performed by Caesar as Val du Val, a great French entertainer performing his world famous number in a Chicago nightclub. It was a soft shoe dance with precision tap. The taps seemed to be done onstage by Caesar but they were really done by an offstage device. Kettle drums added to the effect of the number.

The dance highlight of the show was the "Rich Kids Rag." Young Belle had gone to a birthday party for sixteen-year old Noble Eggleston, a wealthy snob. Fosse looked for the attitudes of people. The number was based on turned-in feet and knees. The kids danced in white gloves to make their snobbery seem elegant. The number was hard for the dancers to do at first, but they worked at it and got it the way Fosse wanted it. It was originally a fifteen minute number but Fosse cut it down to four-and-a-half minutes. Leo Lerman, of Dance Magazine, revealed that Fosse ". . . feels that the best numbers are those that hit fast and hard."[45] As usual for Fosse, he set every movement of the head and fingers in addition to the movement of the body. Time Magazine admired the number: "Bob Fosse's dance sequences are an

enlightened delight. He spurns the assumption that collective frenzy onstage is contagious, gives the playgoer a chance to enjoy what the dance means. In 'The Rich Kids Rag,' blue blood seems to have clotted in the joints of the young snobs who are loftily striving to unbend."[46] Norman Nadel, of the New York World-Telegram and Sun, considered the number to be the choreographic coup of the season. Lee Theodore, of The American Dance Machine, gave her reasons why "The Rich Kids Rag" is one of her favorite Fosse numbers: "It's so witty and so different and so clever and incorporates a dramatic idea with movement and seems so right."[47]

The number which stopped the show was "I've Got Your Number," which was danced by Swen Swenson who played the part of George Musgrove, a professional gambler. Musgrove had been in love with Belle since he was a child. In this scene, he met Belle in a nightclub. When the outbreak of World War I was announced, everyone left the club except Belle and George. George, in an attempt to seduce Belle told her not to fight their mutual attraction. He told her, "Our hearts are shuffled. Let's cut the deck!"[48] He then went into the song and dance. "I've Got Your Number" was a mating cakewalk. Time hailed the number: "The show-stopper is a driving erotic solo, 'I've Got Your Number' done by Swenson who writhes and stomps with flamenco force."[49]

Walter Kerr, of The New York Herald Tribune, noticed how the music enhanced the dancing. "A solo seduction is done with laconic fervor by dancer Swen Swenson and the same controlled slyness slips in and out of Carol Leigh's lyrics and Cy Coleman's melodies without begging for favors or pushing the beat."[50]

Fosse's favorite number in the show was the reprise of the number, "Real Live Girl," because it was soft and lyrical, as opposed to the "big finishes" in the rest of the show. The number took place in the remains of a church in France that was being used as a hospital base. The soldiers yearned to be near women and anticipated a visit from Belle. It was Fosse's idea to change this men's vocal waltz number into a soft shoe. Time Magazine stated: "'Real Live Girl' is a wistful chorale of men without women in which the gestures of front-line commeraderie and foot-slogging are subtly altered to create a balletic lyric of loneliness."[51] The major dance number in Act Two was "Prince's Farewell" which was a series of dance parodies on nationalistic folk dances, ballet, ethnic, tap, vaudeville and jazz. Caesar played Prince Cherney, the expiring regent of Rosensweig who gathered his subjects together for a fond farewell. After the subjects weeped a while, they performed this dance in salute.

In addition to attending to the individual aspects

and details of the show, Fosse and Feuer, as co-directors kept an overall concept in mind which kept the show swiftly moving. Fosse's musicals were becoming more mental and less emotional. Time reported: "In Little Me, co-directors Cy Feuer and Bob Fosse have provided not only professional polish, but also sureness of tone: they sun loveability, yet avoid being hard boiled. The present temper of the better musicals is cool, detached and flip."[52]

Fosse received another Tony for his choreography on Little Me and won the Saturday Review Critics Poll. Although the show received critical acclaim and ran 257 performances, it was not a financial success, so Caesar went on tour with the show in order to recoup the investor's money.

In 1963, Fosse once again appeared onstage in yet another revival of Pal Joey at the New York City Center. Judith Crist, who had not approved of Fosse's earlier interpretation of Joey in 1961, wrote in 1963, "Bob Fosse does seem more at home in the title role than he did two years ago; he still hasn't reached full-blown heel stature but he has developed a subtle nastiness--and what an impeccable dancer he is!"[53] The other critics agreed that Fosse had improved in the role. McClain wrote, "Bob Fosse is back on the old stand doing business as usual and it seemed to me that this time

around, he added to his laurels in the dance department."[54] Leonard Harris, of the New York World-Telegram and Sun thought that this time Fosse was cockier and surer. "As Joey, that skinny, gum-chewing dancer with a heart of brass, Bob Fosse has improved and amplified the performance he gave in the City Center's revival of 1961."[55]

After performing in Pal Joey, Fosse began working on the production of Funny Girl in the fall of 1963. This was the musical based on Fanny Brice's life and was produced by her son-in-law, Ray Stark. It was to star Barbra Streisand. When Jerome Robbins left as director, due to a disagreement over the capability of Isabel Lennart, the librettist, Fosse was brought in to direct. Jule Styne related his experience working with Fosse. "He came in with a whole new set of ideas, some brilliant, on how to make it work. By now, Bob Merrill and I were dizzy. Then, just as suddenly, Fosse quit. In early September, Stark had been checking on Fosse's capabilities. Bobby heard about it. It was just as well. Barbara wasn't sure she wanted Fosse."[56] The show had to be shut down for several months after Fosse left. Fosse hadn't signed a contract for Funny Girl and thus received no money from it, though some of his early ideas were incorporated into the show.

The next project Fosse began working on was On a

Clear Day, then titled, I Picked a Daisy. Alan Jay Lerner, who was writing the book and lyrics discarded his first draft of the show and had begun writing another version after a spring opening had already been planned. Casting had already begun but six weeks before rehearsals were to begin, Feuer and Martin cancelled production plans because of the shape of the book.

So, to keep busy, Fosse accepted the position of director-choreographer on Pleasures and Palaces. Just as Funny Girl and On a Clear Day had collaboration problems, so did Pleasures and Palaces. Pleasures and Palaces was adapted by Frank Loesser and Sam Spewack from Spewack's play, Once There Was a Russian, which had closed after one performance in 1961. Spewack felt that it could be successfully adapted into a musical. He thought that some of the exposition which had slowed down the straight play could be told through song and dance. The plot centered on the historical figures Catherine the Great, Prince Potemkin and John Paul Jones. John Paul Jones went to Russia, according to the plot, after the American Revolution to help Catherine the Great defeat Turkey. The two major problems with the show were the male lead and the lyricist-composer. The show had been in rehearsal for two weeks, and the male lead had not been signed. The stars that the producers and director had wanted were unavailable. Finally, they signed an

English actor, Alfred Marks. Terv of Variety realized that Marks couldn't handle the slapstick aspect to his part. "There is an extremely difficult problem in the direction. Granted that the pace and the timing undoubtedly will improve during this break, Fosse's most onerous task is what to do with Alfred Marks, the show's leading male character."[57] After Marks was panned by the rest of the out-of-town critics, he was replaced by Jack Cassidy, but it was too late to help the show.

The problem concerning the composer-lyricist, Frank Loesser, was that he was dying of cancer, and no one had realized how sick he really was. Fosse had worked successfully with him on How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, discussed earlier in this chapter. Verdon remembered the unfortunate situation concerning Loesser. "Jo, his wife was with Frank constantly. Frank was hiding cigarettes in the grand piano and Jo would do a search in the room like it was an Easter egg hunt. We all knew Frank smoked but no one thought that much about it, but apparently he knew that he was really going to die."[58] Because of his illness, Loesser was unable to write some of the music that Fosse needed for dance numbers and was unable to do the necessary out of town rewriting.

In addition, the Moiseyev Ballet had performed in the United States so that the critics and audience were

aware of what the authentic Russian dancer looked like. Fosse tried to alleviate this problem by stating about the Russian dances as rehearsals started, "For one thing it's been done to death and no one can do it quite as well as the Moiseyev. What I'll try to do is give the flavor of it and my point of view of it."[59] Evidently Fosse's point of view was not exciting enough to compete with the memory of the Moiseyev which was still in people's minds. Pleasures and Palaces did not have a coherent overall concept like those which enhanced Fosse's previous shows. Lois Cook, of the Detroit Free Press, commented, "Pleasures can't make up its mind whether to be an old-fashioned costume melodrama or a commentary on current Russian-American relations."[60] Jay Carr, of The Detroit News, titled his review which panned the show, "Palaces Da, Pleasures Nyet." Pleasures and Palaces never opened on Broadway.

In 1966, Fosse returned to Broadway as choreographer-director of Sweet Charity. Fosse and Verdon had gone to see Fellini's film, Nights of Cabiria. After viewing the film, Fosse stayed up all night working out a musical treatment for the plot of the show which became Sweet Charity. When Fosse awakened Verdon at six a.m. to show her what he'd done, she loved it. Fosse attempted to write the libretto for Sweet Charity himself. The pre-tryout libretto credits were given to Bert Lewis, Fosse's pseudonym. Neil Simon was helping Fosse on the

libretto and eventually Fosse left the responsibility of the libretto to Simon. The producers were Robert Fryer, Lawrence Carr and Joe and Sylvia Harris. Cy Coleman was the composer; Dorothy Fields wrote the lyrics.

In Sweet Charity, the Roman streetwalker of the Italian film was changed to an American dance-hall hostess who was in search of love. Fosse went to dance-halls to do research for the show. He found little dancing being done. There was mostly conversation and groping. The ages of the girls ranged from eighteen to fifty years. Some girls had worked in one place for twenty years. At that time, the girls charged $6.50 for a half hour. Fosse spent $150 in these dance halls to collect material for the show. Verdon accompanied him twice. Fosse decided to soften the rather rough atmosphere that he found there.

Sweet Charity was a show which was dominated by movement and dance. As noted in Chapter Three, Fosse had a talent for observing movement of people going through everyday routines. As a choreographer, Fosse used these movements to make his dances more concrete and relevant to the plot. As Fosse became more involved in staging numbers, as with How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, he became more adept at using movement to help to emphasize a point such as through exaggeration of movement. Sweet Charity was a musical

which was in perpetual motion. Harold Clurman, renowned director and critic for The Nation, praised Fosse for the authenticity and creative use of the movements in Sweet Charity. "Talented Bob Fosse, who conceived, staged and choreographed the entertainment has created dizzying patterns of movement out of ugliness. The result is a kind of brilliant and ingenious hideousness which is a style--a style wrought from the streets and manners we observe as we enter and leave the theatre."[51]

Fosse used the combination of dance and signs throughout the show to relate plot. In the opening of the show, Fosse used the combination of dance and signs for expository purposes. Janice Glann explained in her dissertation on "Assessment of Functions of Dance in the Broadway Musical": "The musical opens with a spotlight picking up the major character who begins to dance aimlessly about the stage. While she dances, four signs appear in succession reading, 'The Adventures of Charity,' 'The Story of a . . .', 'Girl Who Wanted To Be . . . Loved.' The signs disappear, and she concludes her dance. The two elements work together in supplying background about the character and the situation."[67] Throughout the show, Charity, played by Verdon, revealed her character through her stance and movement. Norman Nadel commented:

> What director Bob Fosse has done is to detail the hilarious and sometimes poignant adventures of

> Charity essentially in the crystal-clear language of the dance, individual and ensemble. The truth is that Miss Verdon is always dancing, even when she's walking, getting comfortable in a closet while her date is making love to another woman or biding her time in a stuck elevator as she tries to soothe a panicky companion.
>
> All of these situations--and movements--are grace, comedy or eloquent statements of personality, and all of them are story-telling. Dialogue becomes a mere accessory for Miss Verdon, even though she speaks it enough. She can say more with the casual pivoting of a knee than Webster ever catalogued."[62]

Although Verdon was onstage for almost all of the show, she was featured only in three of the six main dances. The dance numbers that she was not in were ensemble numbers. The first ensemble dance number was "Big Spender." This number served to set up the atmosphere of the dance-hall. The girls hung over the railing seductively to entice the customers. Stanley Kauffmann, of The New York Times, praised the number. "Mr. Fosse's staging of numbers is often superb. 'Big Spender' in which the hostesses line up at a railing behind the footlights, is a splendid mobile frieze of floosies."[64]

The next ensemble number was "The Rich Man's Frug." A rich movie star had had a fight with his girlfriend so he picked up Charity for the evening and took her to a fancy club. "The Rich Man's Frug" was choreographed into three movements, "The Aloof," "The Heavyweight," and "The Big Finish." "I have always been very interested in the curious vitality of these disc spots," says Fosse,

"and I took a general impression of a couple of these places and such dances as the Monkey, Watusi, and Frug to give a kind of impressionistic view."[65] The dance numbers began with dead-pan expressions and automatic movements stemming from boredom and ended with a wild, free-for-all, reckless look. Back and side-lighting were used to give the number a sculptured look. Horizontal and diagonal traffic patterns of dancing were used. Fosse covered the entire stage rather than using bunched-up, tight groups. Nadel commented, "Next to Charity herself, Fosse's production numbers are brightest among the musical's attractions. "Rich Man's Frug' led by Barbara Sharma, Eddie Gasper, and John Sharpe is a brilliant crackling satire on the modern discotheque, with the look of John Held, Jr. caricatures brought up to date."[66] Kerr said that the number seemed like a Marat/Sade set to music. "Cigarettes held at arm's length turn into swaying, waiting to strike cobras, a black-and-white boxing match between the sexes usurps the ring, the joint doesn't just jump, it practically waves farewell to itself in passing."[67]

The big production number in the second act was "The Rhythm of Life." Fosse realized that the original number in that spot, "Raincheck," wasn't working so the composer and lyricist, Dorothy Fields and Cy Coleman, during out-of-town tryouts, wrote in a day and a half,

"The Rhythm of Life." The number was inspired by a group called the Swingle Singers who sang Bach vocally with a basic guitar. "Further hilarity and fine dancing is found in 'Rhythm of Life' where Miss Verdon and McMartin visit a jazz church whose communicants smoke reefer beneath the Williamsburg Bridge."[68] The number was interpolated to showcase Fosse's choreography.

On the other hand, all three of Verdon's dance numbers revealed the feelings of her character. The first and probably the most memorably number in the show, was "If My Friends Could See Me Now." After the club, Vidal, the movie-star, took Charity back to his apartment. She asked him for souvenirs to prove to her friends that she had really spent the evening with him. When he gave her a top hat, cane and photo, she was overwhelmed and her feelings poured out into "If My Friends Could See Me Now." Chapman called it ". . . the most artful and exciting number in the show."[69]

The next number which featured Verdon was "There's Gotta Be Something Better Than this," which Verdon sang and danced with two other dance-hall hostesses played by Helen Gallagher and Thelma Oliver. In this number, the girls sang of their hopes for a different profession and life. The triplets in the music emphasized the girl's determination at that moment. Kerr described the number, As the girls ". . . surround the stage floor

all by themselves, circling it dizzily as they dream of glossier lives tomorrow, sweeping in great arcs, lazily then passionately, until they have compressed a whole world into their tiny, yearning clutches, tamed the impossible by the demand of their feet."[70]

The third dance number which featured Verdon was "I'm a Brass Band." Fosse had wanted another dance number for Verdon. When Dorothy Fields had the first line, she called Fosse who thought it was fine and told her to go ahead and do it. Fields called Coleman and quickly finished the number. "I'm a Brass Band" explained how Charity felt after her boyfriend had proposed to her. Fosse claimed, "At its beginning, I wanted to commence with a quiet, soft series of movements to make a lyric section before we went into the full percussion of the movement use of the marching band."[71]

Charity's moment of triumph was short-lived as Oscar, her boyfriend decided that he couldn't marry her after all because of her past. Frustrated and confused, Charity once again poured out her feelings, this time with the song, "Where Am I Going?" Verdon's acting ability combined with her singing ability to make the number effective. In a lighter vein, Fosse utilized Verdon's aptitude for playing comedy several times throughout the show. Probably the funniest part of the show was when Charity was hidden in Vidal's closet upon

the unexpected arrival of his contrite girlfriend. Verdon, whom the audience could still see, blew smoke from her cigarette into a plastic zippered clothes bag to keep it from escaping and spoiling Vidal's reconciliation with his girlfriend. Also amusing was the part when Charity was trapped in an elevator with the claustrophobic Oscar. Then later, Charity and Oscar were stuck on a ride in an amusement park. The critics approved of and enjoyed these moments in the show. Watching Charity react to being stuck in unusual situations added to the appeal of her character. Some critics felt that Fosse did not have Charity respond deeply enough on an emotional level to her problems. However, all of the critics conceeded that the show was paced so quickly that it was enjoyable even though the subtle emotional nuances of Charity's character were missing.

So, although there was a story, Fosse's dances and staging were the highlights of the show. Walter Terry, of the New York Herald Tribune, found all of the numbers in Sweet Charity effective, with none being weak and some being knockouts:

> Bob Fosse, who choreographed and staged Sweet Charity (he is Miss Verdon's husband), didn't tamper with the star's established style--he simply presented it to its best advantage, weaving her way of dancing into her exposition of a role. But Mr. Fosse, elsewhere in his choreography, went further for he has turned out a production that could well be described as 'A

> Bob Fosse Show'--in other words, although he wasn't up on stage, he co-starred with Miss Verdon.[77]

Kauffmann recognized Sweet Charity as Fossé's evening. "The show's chief attractions are the staging and the dances by Mr. Fosse which have style and theatrical vitality."[73]

Fosse, as director, put more dancing into his shows than were found in most musicals. His transition from choreographer to director-choreographer was easy for him as his approach to directing was similar to that of choreographing. Richard Korthaze agreed with Verdon's earlier statement about Fosse working with images both as a director and choreographer. Kothaze related:

> I don't find he works that much differently because he always, when he's choreographing, gives you images and things to work with in terms of steps. He never just gives you a step as a step per say. It always has some kind of an emotional or dramatic context involved in it in terms of the number, of course, and where it's coming from and where he wants it to go. But there is always some kind of emotion that you can use with the movement so it has more meaning than just steps. He does not like dance steps that are just plain dance steps and have no emotional content to them at least from a director's standpoint if he directs. If he choreographs it, he also directs it emotionally so that even his direction comes the same way. I think he got into directing a lot because of his approach to dance which was almost a director's standpoint.[74]

However, Korthaze conceded that, "Sometimes it's much more difficult to get out of movement what you want emotionally than it is to get it out of words and actors.

Although, I think he has a great rapport with dancers and can get out of them what he eventually wants."[75]

As a director, Fosse was concerned with unifying the various production elements. He frequently worked on the other elements of the show or gave helpful suggestions to others who worked on the show. Casting director Michael Shurtleff verified this: "Mr. Fosse uses the rehearsal and out-of-town tryouts to tailor the show to fit the talents of the people he has hired to be in it."[76]

To a large extent, Fosse used mime and dance to gain effects which used to be done through dialogue and song. Although Fosse was adept at integrating numbers, he still valued interpolating numbers in order to showcase a performer's talent or his own choreography. From How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying to the rest of the musicals that he would direct-choreograph, Fosse heightened the art of staging. Lee Theodore believed that Fosse's contribution to staging is his most important contribution to the fabric of the American musical.[77]

When Fosse became a choreographer-director with Redhead, he had some security from his prior working experience as a choreographer in two previous shows with Verdon. Fosse was able to focus the show successfully on her strengths. Without Verdon, Fosse had two critical successes with the shows in which he did not have total

director-choreographer status, How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying and Little Me. He also successfully staged-choreographed Wonderful World of Entertainment and produced-directed-choreographed Seasons of Youth, specials on television. Unfortunately, the two Broadway musicals without Verdon with which he had total control as director-choreographer were failures. He was fired from The Conquering Hero. Pleasures and Palaces never opened on Broadway. During the time when Verdon was retired from acting, Fosse created a vivid and original interpretation of Joey in Pal Joey at the City Center in 1961 and again in 1963.

When Verdon returned to the stage in 1966 in Sweet Charity, she enhanced the show, as she had in past shows with her talent and personal appeal. By now, the audience was made, however, more aware of Fosse's contributions to the show. The movement was not just Verdon rushing from one scene to the next, but was a seemingly cinematic fluidity throughout the show. This time, Fosse allowed himself three numbers to share with the three numbers in the show that featured Verdon. In past shows with Verdon, all numbers but one were choreographed for her. Fosse had gone from a choreographer who directed to a director who choreographed. As a director, Fosse used emotional detachment as part of his overall concept

of his shows. The critics had accepted Fosse as a major innovator for the American musical theatre.

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V. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN FOSSE'S CAREER

Sweet Charity was the first film that Fosse directed. In making it, Fosse learned, he has said, that "Movies require more energy than the stage. Each decision, each day is crucial. You can't reshoot last week's scenes. When you're putting together a Broadway show, you try things out, polish as it takes shape."[1] When Fosse decided to make Sweet Charity into a film, he held out for Verdon to recreate the lead. Verdon, however, wasn't considered a box office draw. When the offers dwindled, Universal requested the film for Shirley MacLaine. Fosse broke the news to Verdon, who insisted that MacLaine be used so that the backers could be paid back as soon as possible. MacLaine then requested Fosse as overall director of the film.

In Sweet Charity, Fosse's camera style appeared to be uncontrolled. Kenneth Gargaro in his dissertation, "The Work of Bob Fosse and the Choreographer-Directors in the Translation of Musicals to the Screen," observed, "A bold camera style became buried beneath a plethora of unmotivated cinematic tricks."[2] He continued, "Fosse falls victim to every film cliché imaginable. He opens the show needlessly and relies on technical tricks to supple-

ment uninspired scenic reconstitution. Like a child with a new toy, he explores it without due respect. The result is a movie musical that calls attention to itself, but one that also contains moments of cinematic brilliance."[3]

Fosse had been praised so much for keeping his stage shows moving that perhaps he had mistakenly felt that a film, as well, must constantly move. He attempted to gain this sense of movement in the film through camera movement. Fosse stated, "More and more during filming, as I got used to the mobility of the camera, I took advantage of it."[4] Unfortunately, the camera movement seemed aimless and detracted from the film, according to cinema critics. Rex Reed complained, "The camera in this movie is so damned busy moving around, zooming in and out of staircase bannisters, scaling up and down the sides of walls and leaping tall buildings at a single bound--it's enough to send you out of the theater to throw up."[5]

An example of Fosse's uncontrolled style and unsuccessful camera work is in the opening number of the film, "New York Is My Personal Property." Tom Milne, of Sight and Sound, observed that Fosse as director was working against himself as choreographer. The camera should have done less and the choreographer more:

> In the opening number, for instance, as Charity tears gleefully through the city singing 'New York Is

> My Personal Property,' the camera rudely punctuates each line by zooming in, dissolving out, and picking her up again against some new background. Subsequently, the direction settles down to become much less queasy, but there is still a plethora of irritatingly unnecessary dissolves, zooms, frozen shots and pretty montages, usually illustrating the extremes of happiness or despair that Charity has already expressed, or should express in dance.[6]

Another example of Fosse's apparent misuse of the camera is in the number, "The Rhythm of Life." Derek Kelly of Films and Filming claimed that Fosse ruined the sequence by trying too hard. "Actually filmed in a continuous take by multiple cameras and edited later, 'Rhythm of Life' is like a sorry example of cinematic overkill. More like an excerpt from a one-man show than a true ensemble number; it lacks the bite and astringency it could so easily have achieved."[8] "Rhythm of Life" did not succeed in harmonizing editing with the structure of the music. "There seems to be a loss of control and, as a result, the visual rhythm lacks coherence. The camera struggles to make the proper selections."[9]

A camera technique Fosse used throughout the film is the freeze. Fosse had used freezes successfully in the musical, How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, discussed earlier in Chapter Four. As used in How to Succeed, it became part of the overall effect of the show: workers as puppets. In the film, Sweet Charity, the freezes, though used throughout, had

resulted in unnecessary punctuation. For example, at one point Charity stepped on the pointed shoes of an Italian movie star. "The act is immediately frozen in a closeup and the laughter evaporates. It's like a comedian who laughs at his own jokes before they have a chance to take."[10] The Time review accused Fosse of using freezes when he was unable to provide a valid transition.

When Fosse used the camera sparingly to make a selective statement or to emphasize or create atmosphere, he achieved success. The best example of a number adapted from the stage version of Sweet Charity to the film version was "Big Spender." On stage, the audience focused on one or two performers, but in the film Fosse had to make the choice for his audience. "Big Spender" was shot twice. "He decided to use dissolves over the same movement with no time lapse and occasionally show double images."[11]

The image of Charity that MacLaine portrayed was less successful for the critics than Verdon's original creation. Verdon coached MacLaine. "Bob could not remember the dance numbers that he had done for me in Sweet Charity, not exactly, so I taught them to Shirley MacLaine to get her in condition and so Bob would see her doing them, and then he'd make changes for Shirley."[12] The critics did not react favorably to

MacLaine's dancing. Arthur Knight of the Saturday Review, observed, "Unfortunately, a lot of style, a lot of the exhilaration, have gone out of her dancing, and one often gets the impression that choreographer Fosse assigned to her the simpler steps, then cut away to others for the more intricate maneuvers."[13] Verdon denied that this was true. Verdon attested that the number, "There's Gotta Be Something Better Than This," proved MacLaine to be a better dancer than Chita Rivera and Paula Kelley, who also danced in the number. Milne insisted that in that number, MacLaine was the odd dancer out. Kelly agreed, ". . . one wishes Shirley MacLaine had been better suited to the demands of the role."[14] It was not only MacLaine's dancing but her acting that was not of the same caliber as Verdon's. Rex Reed felt that MacLaine's interpretation was too intelligent for the part; that she was on top of every situation and that she wasn't vulnerable. "Reminders of the fabulous Verdon are everywhere in her performance, in her kooky speech patterns, in her attempt at vocal characterization, in her walk, in her delivery . . . but where Verdon brought tears to the eyes, MacLaine merely tests the endurance. She's all muscle and no heart,"[15] Reed commented.

Fosse's approach to working on a film was basically

the same as his approach to working on a play. As a stage director-choreographer, Fosse would try blocking, bits of business and dialogue in different ways until he saw or heard what he wanted. For a film, he would have many rehearsals, shoot a scene several times and then shoot it again several times from different angles. With Sweet Charity, Fosse explored the different possibilities film offered to enhance a scene. Unfortunately, however, Sweet Charity, as a film, was neither an artistic or financial success.

Prior to the reviews, Fosse had received offers to direct other films, but once the reviews came out, the offers dwindled. For Larry Turman, Fosse spent eight months preparing a film, Burnt Offerings, which was set in a huge old house to enhance the gloomy plot. The project fell through before shooting began. Understandably, Fosse was depressed at this time.

Then, in 1972, Fosse had one of his most productive years. He became the first person to win an Oscar, Emmy and a Tony in one year. The Oscar was for Cabaret. When Fosse was hired for Cabaret, Cy Feuer, one of the producers, believed that he could control Fosse. Fosse had worked previously with Feuer on How to Succeed and Little Me, discussed in Chapter Four. Feuer thought that he could eventually become co-director with Fosse, as he had on Little Me, but Fosse insisted on complete

control. When Fosse started working on Cabaret, half of the three-million dollar budget had already been spent. Verdon had heard, "Cy Feuer had gotten an apartment in Munich which he then rented because the Olympics were coming to Munich and he could rent it out. I don't know if they bought it or leased it for a year which took the movie budget."[16] Also, Feuer wouldn't let Fosse have Bruce Surtees, Fosse's cameraman from Sweet Charity, as cameraman on Cabaret. Fosse's third choice for cameraman was Geoffrey Unsworth, who did the filming.

The original draft of the screenplay was long. Fosse insisted that the script be worked on. The film's sources were the original stories in The Berlin Stories by Christopher Isherwood, I Am a Camera, by John Van Druten, and Cabaret, by Joe Masteroff. Fosse retained the best from each of these in order to create his own version. Hugh Wheeler was brought in to assist Jay Presson Allen on the screenplay.

A major problem was Fosse's relationship with Feuer. When Fosse and Feuer were scouting for locations in Munich, they had dinner in their hotel and went over the various problems including the choice of cameraman. Fosse recalled, "Cy agreed with almost everything I wanted but said the people in L. A. were saying no. Then we went up to go to bed. We had adjoining rooms

and about midnight, through the wall, I heard Cy calling California. It was a terrifying experience."[17] Fosse heard Feuer say that he wouldn't let Fosse have Surtees as cameraman. Fosse claimed that he never felt so deceived. He called Verdon for advice as to whether or not he should quit. Verdon told him to do what he wanted. Fosse needed the job and the money. The next morning, at breakfast, he confronted Feuer and told him that he had heard the phone call and the deception. When Feuer asked Fosse what he was going to do, Fosse finally knew. Fosse told Feuer, "If you want me out, you'll have to fire me."[18] Fosse waited a moment, and when Feuer said nothing, Fosse walked away.

As Fosse began working on the film, he looked for actors who had unusual faces. The Kit Kat Club girls were found in Germany and Austria and each of them could play a musical instrument. Two of the cabaret dancers were from New York and four were from Europe. Hollis Alpert, of the Saturday Review, said that Fosse's instinct for faces rivalled that of Fellini. "The kind of humanity they mirror is complacent, vulgar, corrupt. The girls of the chorus line have an androgynous look, and, sure enough, one bewigged member of the troups is to be found in the men's room relieving himself."[19] The faces of the patrons of the cabaret were made even

more garish by the distortion of the mirror reflecting them.

Two of the show's leads, Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey had been hired before Fosse. Liza Minnelli played Sally Bowles, and she and Fosse enjoyed working together. Fosse described his experience with Liza: "Beautiful. She just gets in there and turns it on. She's open to suggestions but needs few. Loves everybody and everybody loves her. And talent--I've never worked with greater."[20] In turn, Liza trusted Fosse completely. "He makes you feel secure and he works with you."[21] Unfortunately, some of the critics felt that Minnelli was miscast and that she was a flaw in an otherwise outstanding film. Richard A. Blake, of Americana, explained, "She sings and dances with vitality but the wide eyes all American girl personality cannot capture the degradation and ruthless ambition of Sally. She is a splendid entertainer in the wrong role."[22] The New Leader added, "Miss Minnelli cannot act any part without calling attention to how hard she is working and how far she is from having worked it out. She cannot even move right--in this case, like a sexy cabaret artiste and thriving nymphomaniac; instead she rattles around gawkily and disjointedly, like someone who never got over being unfeminine and unattractive."[23]

Joey Gray repeated the role of master of ceremonies

that he had created in the Broadway musical. The first time Gray was in front of the camera, he was playing as he did on stage and Fosse admonished him. Fosse suggested, "Theater and films are two different animals. In films, use restraint!"[24] Fosse put his arms around Gray and asked him to do it again. It took Gray a week to get the effect Fosse was after. But after he did, Fosse thought that he was great. Richard A. Blake agreed, "Joel Gray, as the master of ceremonies, is properly satanic, tempting the corpulent and corrupt patrons of the Cabaret to forget the mad world of Nazi Germany and enter the world of frantic self-indulgence imaged by the Cabaret."[25]

Fosse had learned from his mistakes in Sweet Charity. He compared his technique in Sweet Charity with Cabaret. "There were a lot of the same kind of angles. The same way of treating dancing. The difference is I confined it more in Cabaret, but I used the same things. But maybe I learned something and, of course, times have changed."[26] Remembering the unrealistic backstage sets on Kiss Me Kate of 1953, he was determined to show the seediness of backstage. All the musical numbers were done on the cabaret stage except for "Tomorrow Belongs to Me." To get a proper cabaret feeling, there were only six orchestra performers though there were up to ten for

for the sound track. Fosse's dances had to produce a second-rate effect with first-class skill. At times Fosse was embarrassed because the dances needed to look cheap, bad, and authentic. Above all, Fosse wanted to give the film a sense of reality. He intended to do this by intercutting gay musical numbers with drama.

From the first number, "Wilkommen," Fosse began intercutting scenes. "Wilkommen" was begun by the M.C. in the cabaret and was intercut with Brian's arrival at the railway station. Brian was a young American who had come to Germany to give English lessons and to observe life in order to be able to write about it. Thus, the number served as a welcome to Brian and to set up the grotesque situation of his new environment. "Your head was being jerked around," stated Fosse. "There was always a sense of evil in the atmosphere and also, realistically in what was happening on the outside."[27] Fosse also used the technique of tracking in "Wilkommen." Kenneth Vance Gargaro explained:

> The dramatic nature of the tracking camera is evinced more fully when the movement of the camera is at odds with the movement of the dancers. When the dancers and the camera are at odds, they interact. If the movement goes slightly right, the camera goes left. If the dancers shuffle up stage, the camera moves closer. This 'cinematic crossing' provides visual patterning which adds dramatic depth and rhythmic power to the image.

> Fosse uses this tactic several times in Cabaret. During an ensemble section in 'Wilkommen,' the camera tracks sideways as the dancers shuffle opposite. The pattern is usually repeated to the other side for symmetry or there is an intercut to a different angle of vision.[28]

The way Fosse handled the opening attested to his growth as an artist of cinematic translation from the stage. Gargaro noted:

> The cutting begins slowly, resourcefully. No longer is the editing being used for effect, but there is evidence of a 'pacing' strategy. It gains momentum only when the entire cast barrels onstage and the music pumps up a notch. Just as the energy begins to peak, Fosse pulls it back with a series of longer shots which enable the spectators to catch up. As the number concludes to flashing lights and drum rolls, the editing follows in its path. Bit by bit, almost inductively, the reality of Germany, the cabaret and their 'welcome' are built through a montage pattern which is grounded in the musical curve of the tune and embellished through the musical nuances.[29]

In the next number, "Mein Herr," Sally Bowles revealed her character and foreshadowed the numerous abruptly terminated relationships in the film. Sally was another American living in Germany who sang in the cabaret and lived at the same rooming house as Brian. Unlike Sweet Charity, in Cabaret Fosse used selective closeups to emphasize his choreography. Gargaro has stated, "The selective approach to photographing a dance abounds in Fosse's work. 'Mein Herr' from Cabaret draws its expression of sexuality from controlled movements which are

isolated by the camera."[30] Some examples were the slow unbending of Sally's torso, her fingers drumming sensually on the back of her chair or on her thigh, and the suggestive movement of her knee.

Another number, "Maybe This time," followed Sally and Brian's first night of lovemaking. The camera followed Sally from backstage to centerstage to give a continuous feeling of real space. "Maybe This Time" alternated between Sally onstage and a montage portraying the growing affection between Sally and Brian. Fosse repeatedly used a quick-cutting strategy to build exciting endings. The songs usually would peak at a crescendo, a series of accents or an accelerando. Because "Maybe This Time" peaked at a musical and emotional crescendo, there was minimal reaction to it by the cabaret audience. Gargaro explained: "The expected ovation of the stage audience never comes. There are only a few people in the audience and their applause is barely polite. Sally's truthful expression of sentiment meets unlistening ears--Fosse has thrown a curve. The viewer, thrilled with emotion, is blasted by the reality of the film."[31]

"Money" is a number which was cut in directly after Sally sees Baron Maximilian von Heune's chauffeured limousine. The limousine inspired Sally's avarice, and "Money" expressed Sally's desire. This number had no

montage. It was shot in simple angles and dollies and tracking. The excitement was created by the cabaret performers themselves, Minnelli as Sally and Gray as the M. C. This number continued the emphasis of the reality of the stage which had been established earlier. "Money was also symptomatic of the decaying morals of the German society," Gargaro commented. "In translating Cabaret to the screen, Fosse has chosen to emphasize monetary and interpersonal excesses along with the innate blindness of a desperate people. This choice somehow expresses in filmic terms the hysterical posture of Germany which gave rise to the Nationalist Socialist movement, fear, and eventually war and genocide."[32]

Another number worth mentioning, "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," was the only number not filmed in the cabaret. "The sequence serves to remind that what goes on in the Kit Kat is not the single cause for horror,"[33] remarked Joe Blades in his article for Literature/Film Quarterly. Blades accurately described the number:

> At first, the scene appears pleasant enough: a beautiful, blond youth begins singing in a lilting tenor voice. Then slowly, the camera travels down from the boy's sunny Nordic face, tilting down past his shoulder--to the swastika armband on his sleeve. With each chorus, more and more people join in, rising to their feet as they do, while their fervor increases, their voices swelling to a crescendo. Finally, as the camera zooms away into the distance and the refrain becomes softer and softer, there is a quick cut to the Master of Ceremonies smirking up,

> full-face into the camera. Fosse once more takes an opportunity to link the Kit Kat Klub with the social situation.[34]

Fosse, with the camera isolating an old man's face in reaction to this scene, further commented on the situation. Blades reported how ". . . the camera lingers on the face of a puzzled old man as his countrymen--all younger than he--shoot to their feet in the rousing chorus of a Nazi anthem. The music swells, the old man glances surreptitiously at those standing around him--finding it difficult to believe or understand their fervor--and the effect is devastating."[35]

Fosse was as masterful in the dramatic scenes as he was in the musical ones. Fosse would employ various methods in order to get the reactions that he wanted from his actors. In one scene, Marissa Berenson, as Natalia, was to react deeply when she opened the door and saw that Nazis had killed her dog. Berenson expected to see a stuffed dog. Instead, Fosse had put some pig's intestines in a plate on the floor without telling her. Berenson's reaction to the intestines was appropriate for the scene.

Fosse was just as effective with comedy scenes. Sally shouted to Fritz on the second floor of the library, "Goddamit, I'm going to have a baby! . . . The quick reaction of the first floor 'audience' tops off the laugh. The obvious sedate nature of the set and the inappropriate

shout combine for cinematic comedy,"[36] noted Gargaro.

Fosse described his favorite scene in Cabaret:

> . . . the menage scene with Liza and Michael Yorke and Helmut Griem where they are all dancing, get drunk, and go around in a circle. It was obvious there was a great undercurrent of sexuality but nothing was said. That was not scripted. It was something I discovered. Music played an enormous part there too. The three actors arrived and they didn't know what we were going to do that day and neither did I. I asked for the scene and they suggested we go into a little room. But I said I wanted this enormous room which was as big as a ballroom at the Waldorf. It was something instinctual. Things were really working for me then. We were playing 'I'm Sitting on Top of the World, a 1930's record, very sensual. We were playing the music and the actors got involved in it. It was Liza's flirtation with wealth, and she was sitting on top of the world.[37]

After the success of Cabaret, Fosse returned to television to co-produce with Fred Ebb and direct-choreograph a special for Liza Minnelli, Liza with a Z. There were no guest stars on the 52-minute program sponsored by Singer Sewing Company. The entire production was filmed before a special invited audience at the Lyceum Theatre, a Broadway theatre which was converted into a television studio for the program. The program was filmed in May before 947 "Black Tie" guests and was aired the following September. Fosse used eight 16mm cameras in order to have greater flexibility in editing. Barbara Goldsmith, in her article in Harper's Bazaar, explained the setup:

> The cameras were scattered throughout the theatre, in the wings, orchestra, balcony, aisles, upper boxes and backstage. Three of the cameras held a 1200-foot film load, which enabled them to shoot each of the four 13-minute segments in their entirety. Three smaller cameras held a 400-foot load, which meant a reloading with the speed of a Grand Prix pit stop, and two were handled, one by Owen Roizman, the cinematographer of The French Connection.[38]

There was 38,000 feet of film for Fosse to edit. As with Cabaret, Fosse used intercutting. This was the first time that it had been done for a television special. Fosse viewed the results of three cameras simultaneously on a triple headed Steenbeck editing machine. His rough selections took him a month to make.

Fosse wanted to create the feeling of a live performance. One way that he accomplished that was through the beginning of the show. Backstage at the beginning, Fosse showed actors, the conductor consulting. He also showed the audience entering and Liza getting made up. There was a freeze and the downbeat was heard. Fosse switched to the conductor conducting the overture and then there was the announcement, "Ladies and Gentlemen, Miss Liza Minnelli." Minnelli entered the spotlight to sing "Yes." The first of four parts had begun. The other way Fosse created the feeling of a live performance was explained by Kenneth Gargaro. "No matter how extensive the selective exploration of the stage proper becomes, Fosse

always places the view at intervals in the aisle behind the audience with their heads at the bottom of the screen. This shot reestablishes the full frame of the stage and acts as a reminder and cements into a whole the fragmented reality of audience backstage intercuts."[39] Also included in the first part was the song, "It Was a Good Time."

In Part Two, Minnelli danced to "Son of a Preacher Man." Instrumentalists were on a scaffold in view of the audience, and the lighting was exposed. Five dancers backed up Minnelli. The sound had been prerecorded so that Minnelli could dance without missing a lyric. Next, she did a comedy number and a song, "I Gotcha." Part Three opened with Minnelli singing and dancing to "Bye, Bye Blackbird" and included "Mammy." The last segment was a medley of songs from Cabaret. "Precise editing, intense colors and broad washes and exuberant yet controlled camera mobility combined to capture the intense excitement of a stage show for the television viewer,"[40] Gargaro summed up.

After receiving an Oscar and an Emmy, Fosse went on to win a Tony for his direction of Pippin. Stuart Ostrow, producer, mortgaged his home to invest in the show. Roger O. Hirson wrote the book, and Stephen Schwartz wrote the lyrics and composed the music. Fosse saw possibilities in the small-scale show that he was

originally given. He has explained the problem with the initial story. "I found it terribly naive and eight-years old. So I tried to take a little bit of that innocence away and add a little bit of cynicism. In doing so, the part of the Leading Player became very strong, Ben Vereen's part. Stephen Schwartz always felt that was wrong."[41] Fosse met with resistance from Schwartz throughout rehearsals. Schwartz didn't have faith in the things Fosse wanted to do and refused to recognize that Fosse had total control. Friedman, again stage-managing, explained, "When you hire Bobby, you let him do the work. You don't say to him, 'No, no.' You make suggestions."[42] It was contractually agreed that Fosse could contribute to his shows as an author. The Leading Player became an actor who introduced scenes, was a go-between for action and audience, and added transitions of scenes from dialogue to song-and-dance. Originally, what was to become the Leading Player had been an old man who was the ring-leader of a band of roving players. Fosse told his casting-agent, Michael Shurtleff, that he needed someone vivid for the part and that he'd love it to be a dancer. Shurtleff auditioned every character man in town, but most of them hadn't kept up their dancing. Then Shurtleff thought of asking Ben Vereen, who had been a dancer in Fosse's film, Sweet Charity, to audition.

Shurtleff described the result. "What he brought in was sensational. He took the scenes from the script for the Old Man, paltry as they were, and around them he wove three singing numbers ending up in a big dance solo. For the first, time, our 'Old Man' came to life in the person of a young, sexy, humorous Black actor who was an irresistible singer and dancer. The role was enlarged and rewritten for Ben Vereen. He walked away with the show."[43]

All of the major characters were cast against conventions of their roles. The straight female lead was cast with a comedienne. The mother was cast with a sexy young dancer as a satire on the classic golddigger. The sentimental old grandmother was cast with the salty vaudevillian, Irene Ryan.

Pippin was a loosely woven tole of Charlemagne's son in search for his identity. Along the way he found war, sex, revolution, and family. Fosse said, "The statement of the show is that life is pretty crummy but, in the end--there stands the family--pretty ugly, stripped of costumes and magic, but holding hands."[44] The show was performed without an intermission. Brendan Gill of the New Yorker, described how Fosse enhanced the basic plot. ". . . the plot has been encapsulated within a framework of magic and horseplay. This framework

is treated with a Pirandelloesque disdain for conventional dramatergic make-believe--the actors often step outside their roles to comment on the actions and exhort each other by their own real first names."[45] Fosse successfully juxtaposed medieval "history" with modern show business.

Pippin was the first of two Fosse shows to be performed on a raked stage. The advantage of using a raked stage was that the audience had a better view of everything. Gwen Verdon was not in Pippin but was in Chicago a few years later, which also had a raked stage. She explained the disadvantages of using it:

> Its disadvantage is that it's much more costly to construct sets for a raked stage so they won't fall over. The whole weights and balance and perspective has to be adjusted. For dancers, it is murder because you keep tipping forward and finally your body, and I guess your inner ear, whenever your balance or sense of center is, adjusts to the rake and finally you dance on it and you don't feel like you're tipping forward. But you either develop aching knees or aching back and the minute you go to a flat floor, you start falling on your back because You've adjusted to the other.[46]

The scenery was minimal. Martin Gottfried, of Women's Wear Daily, alleged, ". . . Fosse even stages Tony Walton's enchanting scenery, keeping it simple and in dance time with the rest of the show as it dropped or slipped in and out, always leaving enormous spaces for dancing."[47] At times, no scenery was used, and the

costumes and lighting accentuated the dancing.

The critics all commended Fosse for the fluidity of the show. All of the elements were so well integrated that they seemed to flow one out of the other without any kind of break in the action or overweighted emphasis. In Pippin, the dancers and singers were used as human set pieces. Fosse attempted cinematographic scenes dissolves on the stage with his dancers. Kenneth Gargaro explained, "They also served as transitional devices--moving off the stage at the end of one number enacting the previous choreography in the slow motion, while the new action swings into place under the suggestive cover of the overlap."[48]

There were six major dances in Pippin, "Magic To Do," "War Is a Science," "Glory," "Sensual Ballet," "Sensual Ballet Two," and "Spread a Little Sunshine." The first was "Magic to Do." Edwin Wilson described how Fosse set the mood for the evening with this number:

> The production is conceived as a magic show. The curtain raises on a sheet of smoke through which we see illuminated white hands--no bodies or faces--but stark hands suspended in a black void. The effect is startling, but it is only the beginning. An M.C., or Leading Player as he is called, stuffs a red handkerchief into his fist. It disappears and he displays his empty hand. He goes to a crack in the floor, and pulls out the handkerchief; it opens into swags of red silk and arches of rope which rise to the ceiling across the entire stage, framing the court of Charlemagne. It is a

> spectacular feat. But the magic of Pippin is more than handkerchief tricks; it is theater magic of a kind we have not seen for a long time.[49]

Fosse's anti-war dance was "War is a Science." It occurred when Pippin went to war but was also Fosse's comment on the war in Vietnam. Wilson vividly described it. "The battle is a minstrel show with an interlocutor and end men; as soldiers die in tableau in the background, three dancers with straw hats and canes do a superb soft show down front. It is quite possibly the most original and telling anti-war number the American musical has produced."[50]

Pippin's sexual awakening was shown through the "Sensual Ballet." In "Sensual Ballet Two," Pippin's failure at love-making was indicated by a couple performing a romantic pas de deux which climaxed when the lover dropped his mistress. "Spread a Little Sunshine" was performed as a bump and grind by Pippin's Stepmother, Fastada, who wanted the throne for her own son. "Spread a Little Sunshine" was performed as Fastada plotted Pippin's downfall.

Rose Ann Thom, of Dance Magazine, explained why Fosse's dances were so effective. "His dances have a marvelous vertical thrust, legs appear to stretch high into the torso while each body part operates in isolation with subtlety and strength. Fosse never clutters

a dancer. This kind of movement was as powerful in large group scenes as it is in the individual dancer."[51]

The one non-dance number that most of the critics cited to praise was "No Time at All," which was performed by Pippin's grandmother. It was done as an audience sing-along with the audience following a bouncing ball which moved over the words on a large medieval scroll.

Though not all of the critics thought that Pippin was a perfect show, they all valued Fosse's contributions. Douglas Watt, of the Daily News, declared, "Fosse, responsible for the entire direction--dances and all--has again given us a superlative example of musical staging. The show is animated, sexy and lovely to look at, especially inasmuch as the ensemble boasts several stunning girls."[52] Jack Kroll, of Newsweek, called Fosse a brilliant choreographer-director, who ". . . has programmed everyone right down to their toe-wiggles. The result most of the time is that glow of idiot happiness that accompanies first rate entertainment."[53] Edwin Wilson asserted, "This is what the American musical should be: using the vast resources of dance, music, scenery, and lighting we have developed to serve an original idea."[54] He thought that parts of Pippin were exceptional. Wilson continued, "But more than that, the parts fit the whole, no matter how far the show goes

toward fantasy, it always returns to Pippin's simple story."[55]

Fosse directed a television commercial for Pippin which showed an excerpt from the show. Fosse was the first person to use this kind of commercial to promote a Broadway musical. Thom described it: "It is a brief dance for a man and two women, accompanied by a memorable organ tune. The dancers perform very small, stacatto, stiff-legged steps. They don't go very far but they captivate."[56] The commercial proved so effective that other producers and directors began using brief excerpts of musical numbers on television to promote their musicals.

Fosse next directed Liza Minnelli in a one-woman show on Broadway at the Winter Garden theater. The show, Liza, opened on January 6, 1974 and ran for three sold-out weeks. It had little new material. Most of the material was from the 1972 television special, Liza with a Z. Fosse also co-choreographed with Ron Lewis. Fosse waived his fee in exchange for one to two percent of the weekly gross. The show grossed $413,815 in the three weeks. Clive Barnes of The New York Times reported, "Mr. Fosse's staging has the off-hand ease of mastery, and together with his co-choreographer, Ron Lewis, he devised a few simple but starkly effective

production numbers for Miss Minnelli and the attractive and talented quartet of dancers she has brought with her."[57] This was the first show taped for the archives of the New York Public Library Theatre Collection preserved by the Theatre on Film and Tape Project.

After the opening of Liza, Fosse flew to Miami to begin filming Lenny. Fosse worked on the film for half of his market value but owned a share of the profits. Lenny was a film based on the life of comedian Lenny Bruce. Julian Barry, who had written the stage play with the same name, wrote the screenplay with Fosse's input. Marvin Worth, one of the producers of the play, also produced the film. Worth had been Bruce's manager. Fosse was reunited with Bruce Surtees who was director of photography. Alan Heim edited the film.

Fosse chose Dustin Hoffman for the role of Lenny over Ron Liebman and Cliff Gorman. Fosse even lowered his own fee to be able to hire Hoffman at his expensive fee. Fosse had worked a year on the script with Barry. Fosse had interviewed friends and relatives of Bruce. Some of the interviews had been conducted by journalist Lawrence Schiller. Fosse revealed his findings about Bruce: "So I began reading all the interviews and found out he was a very contradictory character, very hard to pin down. It was most difficult. So I decided on this technique of questions and answers and interviews in

order to try and seek out what Lenny was really like; and the material just seemed to lend itself to an interview technique."[58] The film was hard to do because Bruce had died just eight years prior to filming and was vivid in people's memories. People Fosse had talked to had contradictory memories of Bruce's behavior, conflicting reactions to and descriptions of the same incident. Fosse explained, "What finally happened is that both Dustin Hoffman and I inundated ourselves with as much material as possible and came up with a character we thought contained maybe not all of the accuracies of life but the essence of it."[59]

In the attempt for accuracy, Fosse also hired Bruce's mother, widow, and daughter as technical advisors. They read the script for accuracy of detail and gave recollections. Bruce's mother, Sally Mar, had wanted to play herself because she thought that it was such a beautiful film. "But I thought that casting her would somehow cheapen the picture; it would seem like an attempt to cash in on a kind of maudlin feeling about Bruce's death,"[60] countered Fosse. Fosse rehearsed for three weeks, spent sixteen weeks shooting and spent four months editing 360,000 feet of film down to 11,000 feet, or two hours of film. Paul Zimmerman of Newsweek, described the technique Fosse used throughout the film

concerning the interviews of Bruce's family and agent: "With the bravura of a master showman, Fosse uses these reminiscences as intros to long and short takes from Lenny's life and as commentary on them. He splices in swatches of a classic Bruce club act so we can follow the feedback behind his life and art and find the steamy, outraged, often self-loathing source of his inspirations."[61]

In preparation for his part, Hoffman spent three months listening to records, watching films, reading books and interviewing fifty people. Fosse and Hoffman did disagree on interpretation of Lenny's character at times. One of the problems was that Hoffman didn't have a lot of the hate and anger the real Bruce had. Another problem was that Bruce's monologues in the film were written, but Hoffman had to appear to be improvising them. At times, Fosse would put cameras on Hoffman and would rap with him as a warmup. Other times, actual jazz music was played to get Hoffman into the mood. Fosse admitted:

> Lenny Bruce's monologues were jazz riffs. He was a great fan of jazz improvisation. Much of his style was from the big jazz stars like Miles Davis and Charlie Parker. I tried to carry the improvisational jazz feeling of his monologues into the film. I always sense the music. For Dustin, we would have a jazz quartet improvise before we shot the monologue to get the feeling of freedom and of being able to take off on a subject. Lenny was famous for it. He'd hit a subject, which would be the same as a

> musical theme, then he'd elaborate and embroider from there as the ideas came to him. It was much the way a jazz musician takes off on musical theme.[62]

Fosse chose Valerie Perrine to play Bruce's wife, Honey over Tuesday Weld and Joey Heatherton. Because Bruce's widow was still alive, the role of Honey in the film was altered and made sweeter, more sympathetic, and vulnerable. Perrine had been introduced to Fosse by her agent. She did a screen test and then worked on a few scenes with Fosse and got the part. Though Hoffman was content with getting an outline of what he should be doing from Fosse, Perrine, as Honey, wanted to be told exactly what to do. Fosse would explain what had happened between Lenny and Honey in a scene and then try to relate it to Perrine's personal life. Probably the strongest reaction Fosse got from Perrine was in one scene where Fosse wanted Perrine to be grief-stricken. Fosse asked Perrine to go back to the time of her life when she was about to be married. He asked her to remember how she felt when she loved her fiancé and how she felt when he suddenly died. Fosse got the action he wanted but many people on the set throught that it was a cruel thing for Fosse to do.[63] Five years prior to shooting the film, Perrine's fiancé had been killed in a hunting accident a month before they were to have been married. Perrine had been depressed for a long time afterwards. Perrine

claimed that she was not upset over Fosse's directing approach. Fosse used similar shock tactics to get reactions from the extras who were in the nightclub scenes. Fosse would yell at extras, "You're ugly," or "What are you doing here? Get out."[64] The extras' startled reactions would then be used as reactions to Lenny's obscene jokes.

The one scene in the film that Perrine was apprehensive about doing was the graphic lesbian scene. She was worried about having to touch a woman without getting disgusted by it. Perrine admitted:

> But when we finally got to it, it was so technical, it was like a dance. Bobby acted it all out for me before we shot it and he kept saying, 'Don't worry about it, Valerie,' He was so right. Once we started, I kept thinking about camera angles and things. I had no sexual feelings at all while we were doing it. We were both shaking a little bit. The other actress was very young, and in her first role with a big director, so I kind of adopted a sisterly attitude towards her.[65]

Fosse used the camera to choreograph an effective strip by Perrine as Honey. Kenneth Gargaro observed, "The astute selection of close-up and angles prevents Honey's body from appearing pornographic. She seems instead to exude controlled sensuality. The camera dwells and glimpses gently building an aura of sexual mystery. It does not reveal but, rather, tantalizes the viewer. The dramatic gesture is one of titillation and the aura follows the expressive forms."[66]

With Lenny, Fosse shot more film than with Cabaret. He was glad because there were problems such as a lot of out-of-town focus scenes and scratched film. As with his two previous films, Fosse would do a master shot and then film it from many different angles with many takes per angle. Sometimes as many as twenty-five to thirty takes would be done on one angle. Sometimes he would redo a scene after moving a glass on a table only a half inch. Thus the film dropped behind schedule. To compensate, the crew worked six and seven days a week, ten to sixteen hours a day. Fosse admitted, "I love the camera; I love the camera movement and camera angles. I've spent so many years of my life as a choreographer that pictures and composition are very important to me. As a choreographer, you see everything with a frame. So my mind just seems to work in terms of framing, and the movement comes from dancing."[67]

Fosse chose to shoot the film in black and white. Surtees explained the advantages. "With the new black and white emulsions they have that they didn't have in the 50's--speeds of 200 and 400 ASA--you can carry a tremendous depth of field which will be interesting since most color is shot wide open and tends to look soft. With black and white, we'll get very sharp focus and sharp light, hardly any gray tones. You should be able

to count the hairs on the actor's eyebrows."[68] The appearance of reality was also aided by the lighting which gave the effect of nonlighting. Andrew Bobrow, of Filmmakers Newsletter, praised this: "To achieve this result with the clarity and continuity that is seen in Lenny is a rare tour de force. Thankfully, it is not played out by the director and cinematographer as a tour de force; rather the technique remains subordinate at all times to the totality of the film, which is as it should be. There is evidence here of great discipline and admirable professionalism."[69]

Lenny was shot in Miami and in the Catskills. Fosse used real waiters to serve drinks. Fosse used alcohol in the drinks to get the extras slightly high. With Fosse's strong emphasis on reality, the critics' main objections to the film was that Fosse didn't realistically portray Bruce's drug problem and Bruce's relationship with Honey. As stated earlier, Fosse chose to underplay Bruce's relationship with Honey because the real Honey was still alive. The attempt to play down Bruce's involvement with drugs, however, was deliberate. Fosse defended his concept. "I think there have been so many good pictures about drugs that if I saw another person shoot-up on film, I'd personally avoid that film. After all, people who knew Lenny, knew he was into heroin, etc. I saw no reason to

hit that aspect over the head. What I was interested in was a man who stood against hypocrisy and for the use of free speech. And also the man who helped change the style of comedy."[70] Hoffman supported Fosse's stance: "It's a key thing that Lenny didn't use drugs to flake out, to get wasted. The drugs were usually uppers, amphetamines from what I understand. They were used, if anything, to keep him going for four days. He'd do a tremendous amount of work, writing, taping. The obsession with his work is a central thing."[71]

Because Bruce was obsessed with the implications, imperfections, and intractability of words, Fosse chose to emphasize that aspect of Bruce's character. Paul Zimmerman gave an example:

> One sequence captures the essential Lenny Bruce and reminds us of his gift for therapeutic shock. As that mix of hip collegians and middle-class intellectuals that was his audience squirms silently, Lenny robs ugly ethnic epithets, 'I see a nigger. And there's another nigger. And, there's a kike.' He goes on and on as the tension builds, pulling the pin on each verbal grenade in an effort to defuse it, speaking the unspeakable to rob each word of its power to hurt.[72]

Tim Cahill of Rolling Stone had spent time with the cast and crew, in the Catskills during the filming of Lenny. The completed film surprised him because there were laughs and tenderness in it:

> The stark lighting and Surtees's cinematography are brilliantly evocative. Bob Fosse's perfectionism which had been irritating then almost unbearable to those on the set translates into a thorough-going intelligence on film. Levels of meaning--emotional, social, legal--emerge in quick cut and somehow manage to illuminate the tired cliche that comedy grows out of pain.[73]

A lot of the film had been created through the editing. For example, most of Bruce's performance scenes were cut together from many takes. Alan Heim, who had previously worked with Fosse on Liza with a Z, edited with Fosse's assistance. Fosse expressed his satisfaction about working with Heim. "He's not a yes man--he's willing to go my way, but at the same time will offer suggestions that are often marvelous. Very seldom did we have disagreements about what take to use, what angle, when to cut. We had a marvelous collaboration."[74]

Fosse's painstaking work paid off in a film that the public and most critics appreciated. Though, as mentioned earlier, some critics had reservations about the way Fosse dealt with Bruce's drug problem and Bruce's relationship with his wife, they still admired other aspects of the film. Pauline Kael, of the New Yorker, said: "Fosse has learned a phenomenal amount about film technique in a short time; Lenny is only his third movie (after Sweet Charity and Cabaret), and it's a handsome piece of work. I don't know any other director who entered movie making so late in life and developed such technical proficiency;

Fosse is a true prodigy."[75] Stanley Kauffmann appreciated Fosse's concept for the film. "This link, between method and matter, is doubled by Fosse himself. He has moved here toward a directing style that would itself approximate the anarchic effect that Bruce used to have with his performances. Apparently, Fosse has modeled his work on the archanarchist of our film era, Goddard."[76]

After directing Lenny, Fosse had a desire to see what it felt like to be an actor-dancer again. It had been ten years since he had starred onstage in Pal Joey and fifteen years since he danced in the film, Damn Yankees. His friend Stanley Donen was producing and directing a film version of The Little Prince. Fosse played the part of an African snake in it. Fosse choreographed his own number. Though the critics gave the film mixed reviews, they unanimously admired Fosse's scene. Paul Zimmerman noted: "In the only moment that comes alive, a snake (played with serpentine suavity by Bob Fosse) dances on the desert, selling death like dope as a release from the pain of living."[77] Kael best described Fosse's scene ". . . Bob Fosse, in his dancing role as a snake, suggests a low-down song-and-dance man from the night world of cooch shows. Hooded in a derby, with dark glasses and a cigarillo tongue, Fosse's got wit in his hissing, shifty pimp's menace; his number is a bit extended but it's the highpoint of the movie."[78]

After completing his role in The Little Prince, Fosse returned to the stage to direct-choreograph Verdon in Chicago. Verdon had been interested in getting the rights to Maurine Watkin's play since the beginning of her career. By the time she was finally able to obtain them, she and Fosse had separated but had decided to continue to work together professionally. Fosse, with Fred Ebb, adapted Watkin's play. John Kander composed the music, and Ebb wrote the lyrics. Chicago was produced by Robert Fryer, Martin Richards, Joe Harris, Ira Bernstein, and James Cressan. In addition to Verdon, the show starred Chita Rivera and Jerry Orbach. Early in rehearsals, Fosse suffered a heart attack. He had open-heart surgery at New York Hospital. He was unable to return to the production for many months. During his illness, Verdon and Rivera held parties to keep the cast together. In addition, bits of the score were being sung in the city's cabarets and on television.

It was Fosse's idea to present Chicago, a 20's musical, without the "Charleston." Fosse explained:

> That was my main goal: To avoid the Charleston and that whole flapper look, which I'd seen done, and seen done well so many many times. And I had in mind--and Kander and Ebb had in mind--to do a Brechtian twenties thing about fake celebrities and about how the people can buy and sell one another and somehow make all of this relate to today--that is, how the immorality of murder can be turned into

> money and fame, which we're still doing today, in our own ways.[79]

Chicago commented on the power of the press to exploit and glamorize criminals, making celebrities out of them.

The set was an important element in Chicago. It was Fosse's idea to have an orchestra onstage, with stairs for the performers that led up to the orchestra. Tony Walton, who had designed the set for Pippin, designed a set for Chicago which did not give a sense of scenes endlessly changing, though the book indicated frequent changes from place to place. The same raked stage that had been used in Pippin was used in Chicago. Fosse and two dancers had worked out the dimensions on trial rakes at the scene shop. In order for his dancers in Chicago to get used to the raked stage, Fosse took them to the Pippin stage to rehearse.

Chicago was subtitled, A Musical Vaudeville. Cleverly, the story was told through a succession of vaudeville routines. Verdon, as Roxie Hart, quarrelled with her lover and killed him. Roxie was sent to Cook County Jail where she met the other murderesses and the matron. Roxie hired Billy Flynn, Chicago's most famous defense attorney. Flynn got the press on Roxie's side and made her into a celebrity. When news of another murderess threatened to take away Roxie's glory, Roxie announced that she was going to have a baby. The press

renewed their interest in Roxie until the verdict of not guilty was announced at her trial. Immediately, Roxie became yesterday's news as a reporter announced another murder of passion. At the end, Roxie teamed up with another acquitted murderess, whom she had met in jail, Velma Kelly, to become a successful vaudeville act.

The first ensemble number was "The Cell Block Tango" which was danced by the merry murderesses as they explained why the men they murdered had it coming. Douglas Watt of the Daily News observed: "In addition to the overall brilliance of his choreography, Fosse creates by far the sexiest dance routines imaginable. As in Pippin he works here with a group of stunning girl dancers (accompanied by boys, of course) who frame the action in sinuous, provocative movement, usually in slow motion. The tension in his movement and his eye for groupings are richly effective. And he has also staged the book scenes wittily."[80] T. E. Kalem, of Time, added, "Fosse makes total demands in the realm of precision. Apart from that, he is the most paganly sexual of choreographers, and Shubert Alley is his mother earth--the source of his awesomely abiding strength."[81]

The scene, in which Roxie tried to persuade her husband, Amos, to raise $5,000 in order to hire Billy Flynn, was done as a dance routine. An announcer stated,

"And now ladies and gentlemen, a tap dance." As Roxie persuaded Amos, four men in bowler hats did a tap routine. Billy Flynn made an unusual entrance for a lawyer. Wilson described it. "Some numbers are stunning. The lawyer, who cares only about money, sings a marvelously ironic song, 'All I care about is Love,' backed by six statuesque girls wafting huge fans more deftly than Sally Rand ever could."[82]

In the number, "We Both Reached for the Gun," Roxie told her press her version of why she was accused of murder. The number was performed as though Flynn was a ventriloquist and Roxie, sitting on his lap, was the dummy.

Roxie fantasized about becoming a vaudeville star in the number "Roxie." Jack Kroll commented:

> Chicago has an astringency and a clenched tightness that will put some people off. Its cynicism sometimes chills its humor and it doesn't have the humane texture of 'A Chorus Line.' But in many ways, it's Fosse's best work, uncompromising and with real strength showing in every idea and image. His casting of Verdon and Rivera is beautiful and so are they. I've never seen better simultaneous singing and dancing than Verdon's in such numbers as 'Roxie' in which she soft-shoes her way to joyful identity as a famous murderess.[83]

Chita Rivera, as Velma Kelly, tried to tempt Roxie into joining her in a double-act which she used to per-

form with her sister. In the number, "I Can't Do It Alone," Velma performed both halves of the act. Richard Philp of Dance Magazine, described this:

> Rivera's hands flutter like propeller blades, her head grinds the windlass neck, her arms lunge skyward and her legs land square down like oiled pistons; her midriff, torso bent like a steel bow, leads the body in an audience assault as she glides with mechanical momentum down the steep-raked stage. Fosse has based her movement on the same raw mechanical sources which inspired painters, designers, architects and engineers in the 1920s. He holds on to this idea and threads these visual dance themes throughout the show.[84]

Not to be overshadowed by Rivera, shortly after the second act began, Verdon performed the solo, "Me and My Baby." This was the one number during their entire collaboration over which Verdon and Fosse had strongly disagreed. Verdon explained:

> We still argue about one number where his concept and idea of the number was right for the show but I was rotten doing it so I fought for a different number and I got it but I know that really, to be very truthful, for the sake of the show and what the show was all about, the other number was a better number for the show. It was in Chicago and I wanted a different number. The 'Me and My Baby' which became a strut and stayed a strut. Even when Annie Reinking took over and did the show. Even made it a better strut for Annie because she is much younger and is a different kind of dancer and a better dancer than I am so he made it a better dance for Annie. But in the very beginning of the show when I had to have throat surgery, Liza Minnelli took over for me and

> then he put it back into the original dance for her which was an imitation Eddie Cantor which was better for the show because the show was more period.[85]

In Act Two, Rivera had another dazzling solo, "When Velma Takes the Stand," in which she showed Flynn the tricks she planned to use in court. Roxie would later steal those tricks in order to win her own case.

As Roxie propelled herself further into the public spotlight, her husband Amos receded even further into anonymity. Wilson described the number, "Mister Cellophane," in which Amos bemoaned his plight, "The same husband later dons the costume of a pathetic baggy-pants comedian, including gloves with no fingers and oversized, floppy shoes, to sing a touching number telling us he is the cellophane man who no one sees--and in the middle of the number he has a scene with the lawyer which proves the truth of his assertion."[86]

A worse fate befell one of Roxie's fellow inmates. The inmate became the first woman prisoner to be hanged in Cook County in forty-seven years. In keeping with the show's concept, Fosse presented the hanging as a circus high wire act. The inmate removed her prison uniform and revealed an acrobat's spangled outfit. After climbing a rope ladder to a high wire, her limp body was shown hanging from a rope in silhouette. Fosse further tied in this circus theme as Flynn told Roxie, "Nothin' to worry

about. It's all a circus kid. Show business." He then explained just what he meant in the number, "Razzle Dazzle." As Wilson aptly stated, "Director-choreographers like Mr. Fosse and Michael Bennett of 'A Chorus Line' increasingly are finding ways to combine genuine entertainment with all the appeal of the song and dance with trenchant comments about our life and times."[87] Clive Barnes of The New York Times viewed Fosse's uses of commentary, of standing aside from a time and a place and hinting at it with a wry, at times even cynical, objectivity, is both the show's salient virtue and also the aspect of it that links it, like an umbilical cord, to Cabaret. It can be seen obviously and at times very rewardingly in Mr. Fosse's directorial or choreographic (for they are much the same) concept."[88]

Many of the critics noticed the similarities in Chicago with his earlier shows such as Pippin and Cabaret. Fosse doesn't look upon repetition as limitation. He has stated, "People have said Chicago is like throwing Sweet Charity, Pippin and Cabaret into one pot. That's fine provided I've taken the best from them."[89] Fosse has said that if he does something once and can improve on it by doing it again, then he feels that its worth using again.

John Beaufort, of The Christian Science Monitor

summed up the show's assets: "Regarded exclusively as a piece of masterfully crafted showmanship--an amalgam of song-and-dance, fluid movement, musical performance, ingenious scenic devices, daring costumery, and bold lighting effects--Chicago fills all the specifications for a Broadway spectacular."[90]

By the time he worked on Chicago, Fosse's method of choreographing had become more flexible. As mentioned in Chapter Three, when Fosse choreographed Pajama Game, he planned what he was going to do before he met with his dancers. As he became more secure in his work, he would still prepare for six weeks in his studio without the dancers but would leave out the details and only rough out the dances. Fosse explained:

> And I start various steps at one time or another, trying various combinations. About the fifth week, I call in a couple of assistants and try out on them what I've done.
>
> I examine each piece and question it and question its lyrics and just fool around with movement and hope. I usually keep a little notebook of odd ideas and somehow the dances start to formulate. I used to be able to create entire dances without the dancers. I could do it all on myself. But I've found as I've gotten older that I can't push myself that far, I can only do--oh eight or sixteen bars of a dance alone, and then it emerges more when I have the dancers who are going to perform it.[91]

Fosse found that the personalities of his dancers or the way a dancer would do a step would lead him in a different

direction than that which he had originally planned. Fosse would take suggestions from dancers. Sometimes he would just give them the general idea of what he wanted done and would edit what they gave back to him. Richard Korthaze, who had danced with Fosse for thirty years, admitted, "I think over the years there's a little more leeway at times but it has to be done according to him, the way he sees it and the way he wants it."[92] Though Fosse doesn't limit himself to his own body, in choreographing, he likes to tryout everything on himself. He explained:

> For some reason, I find it difficult to choreograph sitting down. I have to know what the steps feel like, and thereby bring some originality to the dances, bring something personal to them and even though I don't dance nearly as well as I used to, I still try to do all my choreography myself, at least in some form. Admittedly, sometimes I fall flat on my face in front for the dancers, and I say to the dancers, 'You're not supposed to do this, fall on your face; you're supposed to make it look graceful but this is sort of what I'm after.' I have to try it all and I think I come up with better stuff when I do.[93]

Fosse used to be more involved with patterns and complex steps. The more he choreographed, the more he began looking for the simplest way to say what he wanted to say. Richard Korthaze has said that Fosse has distilled his style. By distilled, Korthaze meant:

> A lot of creative artists when they start, they'd always have a lot of material in their work and then,

> as they get more experience and then mature, their style, they kind of distill it. It's simplified and certain movements are used more and they get variations on one certain movement. Rather than having three or four movements expressed in a certain phrase of dance, Fosse would use one or two movements and elaborate on those movements and simplify the amount of movements that he used and I think that's why his style now has become so distinctive.[94]

Korthaze described Fosse's style: "It's very precise, it's very clean and it has to be for him to be satisfied with it. It is clean in line and clean in position. It is very detailed in every movement and in every part of the body that's used, very isolated. He isolates the body very much to create the style."[95] As with the earlier cited example in Chicago, "Me and My Baby," Fosse would adjust his style to bring out the best in his dancers. Verdon recalled:

> When Annie Reinking took over for me, Annie's legs just go on and on and on she's very quick and she can do grande jetés, big jump splits, so he gave her all those things to do. I mean it would be silly to make her, he would not be fulfilling his job as choreographer or his interest as a choreographer if he made her do only what I do but there are things that I can do that Annie can't do. You know everybody has a quality and he choreographs for that, not just with the stars. He's done it with other people.[96]

Before Reinking took over for Verdon, Liza Minnelli played Roxie Hart for six weeks early in the run. There were not supposed to be any reviews while Minnelli was in the show so that no comparison between Minnelli and

Verdon would be made. Clive Barnes had insisted on re-viewing the show or he threatened that he would not review any future shows of the producers or director. Barnes was quite fair in his review of Minnelli. About comparing Verdon and Minnelli, he said, "This is pretty silly, for it would be like comparing a white wine with a red wine--Miss Verdon is a dancer who sings, and Miss Minnelli is a singer who dances, and both are separately and distinctively adorable."[97] Barnes also gave additional praise to the show and the cast which he found to have come across more strongly on second viewing. The cast was tighter and taughter and the co-stars were as sensationally good as before. Barnes concluded that Chicago was a show that ". . . with or without Miss Minnelli and with or without Miss Verdon, must be seen by anyone interested in the American musical. Bob Fosse's staging and Tony Walton's elegantly conceptual setting are both going to become part of the Broadway legend."[98]

In 1977, Fosse once again left Broadway to appear in a cameo role in the Herb Gardner film, Thieves. Thieves was based on Gardner's Broadway play of the same title. Fosse played Mr. Day, a junkie mugger. The film received adverse reviews and Fosse was not mentioned in them except in passing.

The following year, 1978, Fosse was back on Broadway

as the director-choreographer of Dancin'. Dancin' was produced by Jules Fischer, The Shubert Organization and Columbia Pictures. Dancin' had no book; several composers and lyricists contributed the music and lyrics. It was a show that Fosse had been hoping to do for fifteen years. Fosse's heart condition made him feel pressured by time. He felt that he didn't want to invest two or three years to prepare another book musical. Fosse began getting his ideas for the show, as usual, alone in a studio. This time, however, he paid a few dancers to come and rehearse his ideas for seven weeks. Nearly two-thousand singers and dancers auditioned. Fosse chose sixteen dancers who were adept in various styles. There were also eight backup dancers because of the strenuous pace of the show. Fosse stated:

> I don't look for specifics exactly. I look for well-trained dancers, attractive people, pretty. My dancers have to be multitalented, have a feeling for jazz, be young energetic, ambitious and motivated. I don't look at the face first. In fact, I try to block it out. I squint. But it seems as if good dancers are getting harder to find. I don't know whether my demands are getting stiffer, or whether the good dancers are just getting.[99]

Though Fosse had ideas for many dances, of the ones he developed, only one was dropped out-of-town, though many of the numbers were changed and rechoreographed in Boston. Martin Gottfried realized what was at stake for Fosse:

> Fosse knew he was in trouble with the show in Boston. Some dances were vulgar; others were simply bad and Fosse cut them mercilessly. It was an important point in his career. Having become powerful and celebrated by working solely for commercial success, with Dancin', Fosse was at least aiming to win the respect that Robbins, Prince and Bennett had earned for their artistic achievements. Yet, when it came to crisis, his background and instincts led him to George Abbott principles: fix, remake, satisfy the audience, come in with a winner. Having a show without structure he bound it with speed--no blackouts, no time for the audience to think. He packed three acts into two hours, with no pause in the relentless energy and musical volume. He planned every number to be a showstopper. Fosse got away with this, but Dancin' was still a dance program and not a musical: it has neither form nor continuity.[100]

Though not on stage, Fosse had put his essence into Dancin' through his involvement in its every aspect of the production. Fosse's choice of material for the show may have been artistically good theater at times but it was also a personal statement throughout. Arlene Croce, of the New Yorker, confirmed this:

> Fosse's involvement in the material he uses for Dancin' is inescapable. The show discloses and focuses his personality and his abilities as no other show yet has; it's practically confessional theater. It confirms and qualifies his talent, while aiding our suspicion that he is a driven and cynical man, but it also reveals a degree of self-knowledge that isn't given to many in the entertainment field and here I include Fosse's peers in the 'artistic' branch of the profession.[101]

Dancin' also celebrated Fosse's choreographic style. It summed up the distinctive style that could be recognized as Fosse's choreography. Jack Kroll described it:

> For Fosse, the fanny is as significant as the toe; he loves dislocated hips, whipping head rolls, a punch instead of a port de bras. Where ballet etches, Fosse cartoons, he creates eccentrically pulsating groups, closing and opening like human concertinas or chugging across the stage in odd catatonic poses. He has a genius for vulgarity: at one point his dancers box the compass with thunderous bumps north, east, south, west, a pelvic homage to the universe.[102]

Ann Reinking, a featured dancer in Dancin' felt that isolated undulating shoulders and hips and a turned-in body line, hallmarks of Fosse's style, separate it from other dance styles. "It's extremely sensual." Reinking added, "It requires severe control and extreme freedom. If you can go for one and not the other, you're not doing it right."[103]

Dancin' was organized into three acts. The one number that most of the critics liked was the second one in the first act, "Recollections of an Old Dancer." Jack Kroll noted: "But Fosse creates a slow, haunting soft shoe, danced superbly by Christopher Chadman, who floats along the ground while Gregory Drokar as his 'spirit' dances behind him in a dream of unattainable elegance. What makes this moving is that Fosse faces and defeats sentimentality with a sincerity that finds an exact language in his lovely dance shapes."[104]

The next number, "The Dream Barre," was the one number that the critics unanimously cited as bad. Even Clive Barnes, who raved about the rest of the show, called

it very bad, vulgar and ridiculous. Richard Eder, of The New York Times, observed:

> A few of the numbers do sketch out a minimal plot. 'The Dream Barre' set to a theme from Bach's Sonata for Violin Solo No. 4, displays Charles Ward as an awkward apprentice dancer imagining--and dancing out--a miniature orgy with a ballerina in his dancing class. It does not succeed in being funny--in fact the pantomime of inept lust becomes rather tasteless--and Mr. Ward and Ann Reinking, as the ballerina, hobble themselves briefly in the attempt.[105]

Act Two opened with a tribute to Fred Astaire, "Dancin' Man." Kroll described it: "It's danced by the entire company in white, with Fred's candy-striped neck-tie belts. Tapping, soft-shoeing, stop-timing, thigh-slapping, hat-shaking, everybody becomes Fred Astaire, the man who first turned dancing into dancin'. Fosse and his brilliant dancers have kept the faith."[106] The other number in Act Two that most of the critics cited was "Fourteen Feet." Richard Eder praised it:

> There is another ingenious number, 'Fourteen Feet,' in which seven dancers begin by nailing 14 shoes on to a board stepping into them, and proceeding to show how much dancing can be done with everything--fingers, hips and noses--besides the feet. At one point, the lighting switches to black light, and the phosphorescent lines on the costumes give us seven undulating spiders with tiny jewels for eyes.[107]

"Benny's Number" which opened Act Three was the highlight of the show. It purposely featured Ann Reinking. Fosse choreographed a solo to show off her extensions,

her legs. Eder best described the number:

> Using Louis Prima's 'Sing, Sing, Sing,' it re-creates Benny Goodman and his band. The musicians stand stiffly, in black formal dress, while baggy-suited and extraordinarily spangled dancers swoop and shake in front of them. Mr. Fosse has purposely designed confusion in his juggling dancers; out of it, he draws the clean, soaring lines of Miss Reinking's solo and a finale where the groups suddenly clarity and break clean.[108]

For Eder, Reinking stood out from the other first-rate performers in the show because everything about her seemed to dance including her hair, teeth and expression. Kroll agreed:

> In this cast of dancing stars, Ann Reinking is a meteor. She dances like a daring demon. Orpheus would have happily allowed her to tear him to pieces. In Fosse's astounding, Dionysiac tribute to Benny Goodman's classic 'Sing, Sing, Sing,' her solo is a breath-taking explosion of beauty, grace and power. If dancing is the intelligent body's attempt to express the ineffable miracle of life, then 28-year-old Ann Reinking is a great dancer.[109]

Time added: "The magnetic pivot of the evening is Ann Reinking. She is the incarnation of what used to be called the long-stemmed American beauty. Dance seems to be not only her language but also her manifest and incandescent destiny. Ann Reinking is terpsiglorious."[110]

Fosse loved Dancin' but admitted to recognizing its flaws. Fosse claimed, "It's the toughest, riskiest show around," He added. "Dancers look at it and they

say, 'That's not so hard.' Then you put them in the show and they change their minds fast."[111]

Fosse made an even stronger personal statement than Dancin' with his film All That Jazz. After his heart attack, Fosse had collaborated with Robert Alan Aurthur. They taped two hundred people who had known Fosse in order to gather material for an autobiographical film. The first draft of the script which was realistic was not interesting enough. Fosse admitted, "It needed to be theatricalized. The things that meant something to me personally didn't seem to hold up that well. It was a professional craftsman job of combining characters and fictionalizing incidents, hyping the thing to make it more interesting. Bob was an old friend and he kept trying to make Gideon too nice and I kept trying to make him too black."[112]

They put the project away for a while to work on an adaptation of Ending, a novel by Helma Wurlitzer, which was about a woman whose husband was dying of cancer. After several drafts and interest from Paramount, Fosse decided that it was too depressing to continue. So he and Aurthur returned to the All That Jazz script. Daniel Melnick, President of Columbia Pictures, wanted to produce the film but had only a four-million-dollar budget to offer them. Melnick left Columbia before the

film had been completed and the budget had been spent so half of the film was sold to 20th Century Fox.

Though the film was clearly about Fosse's life--the events, people involved, attitudes--he downplayed the autobiographical aspect during interviews. Fosse insisted, "I don't want to make a movie that no one goes to see or that's basically a cult movie. At these prices, you can't do that any more. Besides, in five years, everybody will forget if this picture was semi-autobiographical or not and they'll just look at it as a movie. They only know anything about me in New York and Los Angeles. Who cares, really? It's not that important what's true and what's not true."[113]

It was difficult to pigeonhole the film in any genre. As a musical, it defied conventions. The protagonist didn't have any song and dance numbers. There was a documentary like sequence of open heart surgery. It also didn't fit into the category of a drama with music because of the lack of emotion throughout the film which allowed dramatic tension to escape. As Vincent Canby, of The New York Times, observed, "All That Jazz is an essentially funny movie that seeks to operate on too many levels at the same time."[114] Fosse mixed realism, impressionism, surrealism, drama, comedy, music in All That Jazz and came up with a technically un-

balanced and stylistically unclear film. Norma Stoop, of Dance Magazine, commented: ". . . there are flashes of real brilliance, both choreographic and directorial, in All That Jazz." She also noted, however, "The highly publicized fantasy sequences, touted far and wide as hallucinatory and surreal, are edited awkwardly, interrupt the flow of the film, and are self-conscious conceits that don't wear well at all."[115]

Fosse had used Fellini's favorite cameraman, Guiseppe Rotunno. Comparisons between Fellini and Fosse naturally were made by the critics. The kindest comparison was made by Agnes de Mille:

> In January of 1980, Robert Fosse released his film, All That Jazz, a most extraordinary treatment in parable and metaphor of the current dilemma of the successful stage personality. Whether or not the picture is autobiographical is of no consequence, nor is the actual texture of the dances which are manifold but repetitious. They are filmed with absolute mastery and the technique and imagination and invention of the film devices is on a par with the best Italian work of this period. Fosse has revealed himself what he promised to be in Cabaret, a great director in films, one of the best in the world today.[116]

Unlike de Mille, most critics thought that Fosse was merely attempting an unsuccessful imitation of Fellini's artistry. Nora Sayer of The Nation commented: "While influences in film are unavoidable and often salutary, models are perilous--because they can inspire pretension.

Most of Fosse's surrealistic scenes are labored and weak; paradoxically, it's very difficult to make a fantasy succeed on the screen--it takes a genius like Fellini to render it magical."[117] Fosse used the character Angelique, played by Jessica Lange, as the symbol of death. Fosse placed her in "a theatrical junkyard full of memorabilia, all the things from his past, all the junky, dusty old remnants of the theatre."[118] The set represented the mind of Gideon, a confused showman. Sayre explained why the scenes with Angelique didn't work: "The most embarrassing intrusion in Jazz is a woman in gauzy white, who, I'm sorry to say, is the angel of death. She chats weightily with the choreographer about love and pain and truth until you yearn to scissor all of the lines. Jessica Lange plays the regrettable angel: remembering how amusing she was in King Kong, I wished that some of gifted ape might liberate her from this role."[119] Sayre also noted that Fosse had borrowed the sounds of breathing on the soundtrack from Fellini and a ticking watch from Ingmar Bergman which she wished Fosse would restore to their owners. Canby noted that Fosse ". . . celebrated himself more cruelly than Fellini, Woody Allen or Ingmar Bergman."[120]

Fosse closely examined his life, especially his self-destructive nature which he tried to enlarge through

film to represent the self destructive nature in everyone. As the Fosse character, Joe Gideon looked at all of the different angles of his life. Fosse the director filmed different kinds of scenes to create the illusion of soul-searching. Canby observed, "There are big, beautiful, steamy typically Fosse production numbers, small intimate dance routines, shots of open heart surgery that may send you under your seat, soul searching gags, fantasies, flashbacks and, finally emerging from the machine-made fog, the figure of a man who isn't always likeable but who deserves the attention he affords himself."[121] Jack Kroll also supported this theory. "Some will dismiss All That Jazz as an egotripping public catharsis, but Joe Gideon becomes a representative figure of our time, a man more honest than most in his self-doubt, self-questioning, self-loathing, self-love."[122]

Aside from the ending of the film, in which Gideon died, the plot and characters involved paralled Fosse's life using the technique of flashbacks. Richard Dreyfuss originally was to play Gideon but he and Fosse did not get along so the part was given to Roy Scheider.

Fosse showed his early burlesque beginnings. The episode with Stephien Schwartz on Pippin was covered in the scene with the song "Take Off with Me." Gideon was shown editing a film which represented Fosse's Lenny.

Gideon was almost replaced by Lucas Sergeant on NY/LA. In reality, Gower Champion almost replaced Fosse on Chicago. The character, Sergeant, was shown planning the lighting design with a model of a set representing I Do, I Do. The show NY/LA for which Gideon was holding an audition represented Chicago. It was on Dancin' that the producers almost decided to cancel the show and collect the insurance. On a more personal note, Leland Palmer played Fosse's ex-wife, Gwen Verdon, and Erzebet Foldi played his daughter, Nicole. At times, Fosse used the actual people in his career to play themselves. For instance, the conductor, Stan was played by Stanley Lowsky who actually was the conductor for Chicago. The stage manager was played by Phil Friedman who really was the stage manager on Chicago. Anne Reinking, Fosse's ex-girlfriend played herself.

Fosse's directorial approach to his actors remained the same on All That Jazz as it had been in his previous films. He would spend sixteen hour days on the set and demanded total commitment from those with whom he worked. Barbara Rowes, of People, explained why Fosse was considered to be a taskmaster: "A notorious perfectionist, Fosse can be brutal in his criticism if he feels dancers are not giving their all." She contirued: "He is constantly helping the female dancers with their positions, working their legs apart with his hands, wrapping

his arms around them to get their hips just so."[123]

As he had done in the past, he used tricks to get the reactions he wanted. One of the dancers, Victoria, played by Deborah Geffner, explained, "At one point as a director's trick, to make me look angry, just before the cameras rolled, he said, 'By the way I saw you in Chorus Line and you stank. Action.' And it worked! It was anger--a 'you son-of-a-bitch' look which was exactly the right emotion."[124]

Erzebet Foldi, Fosse's daughter in the film, rarely needed Fosse to play a trick on her. Fosse's innate sense of casting paid off. He explained, "Besides looking for a girl who could dance, I was looking for an openness and lack of theatricality or an actorish thing I don't much like in children. She tested with three other children who were quite good dancers and attractive youngsters, but there was something about that girl. And inside her is this great sense of humor. She's full of bad jokes. We called her One-Joke-A-Day Liz on the set."[125] The scenes between Gideon and his daughter were the few scenes in which Fosse allowed Gideon's humanity and warmth to show. Jack Kroll explained: "Dance is Joe Gideon's life pulse. Fosse wittily and touchingly shows how Joe can relate to others only through body contact: in a wonderful scene with his daughter he discusses

their relationship while their bodies intertwine as he teaches her the various ballet positions."[126]

The dance scenes in the film functioned as isolated pieces of artistry. Most impressive were the opening audition number and the erotic dance sequence. David Denby of New York best described the former:

> For a while, the framework of putting on a show gives Fosse's megalomania a plausible outlet. There's an exhilarating opening sequence, done without dialogue, in which Gideon selects a chorus line from a hundred or so dancers. As the chosen dancers mesh into a unit, the spins and leaps, highlighted and 'rhymed' by the editing, snap into place like the parts of a beautifully calibrated machine. Here as in Cabaret, Fosse doesn't shoot an overall pattern; he goes for the brilliant dance image, the sustained individual pose and then throws a succession of such images and poses on the screen as if he were flipping through a deck of picture cards. [127]

Kroll commented on the erotic dance sequence: "There's an amazing sequence in which Joe puts on one of his dances for the producers of the show. It's the most high-voltage, blazingly erotic dance sequence ever filmed; Fosse's great young dancers are led by the magnificant Sandahl Bergman."[128]

Fosse intercut shots of an open heart surgery which did not add to the significance of the film. The surgery shown was footage from an actual surgery which had been performed at St. Lukes Hospital in New York, by Dr. John E. Hutchinson, 3rd, and his cardiac team. The

surgery was so impressive medically, that 20th Century Fox donated it to the hospital for teaching purposes. The fact that the surgery was an actual one did not heighten its value to the film. None of the critics were impressed by the surgery. Janet Maslin of The New York Times, explained why the surgery segment didn't enhance the film:

> People don't go to the movies to watch open-heart surgery--it's as simple as that. A miscalculation this violent becomes unforgivable. The problem isn't simply one of gruesomeness, although this medical interlude invariably reduces All That Jazz audiences to terrible little moans and whimpers. It's something worse. Mr. Fosse's autobiographical main character, called Joe Gideon, simply isn't a figure the viewer wants to follow to the bitter end. That kind of connection would require something more human than All That Jazz provides. The film has spent too much time denying Joe's humanity just as surely as it has illustrated his magnetism, his creativity, his charm.[129]

Stanley Kauffmann of The New Republic, also agreed that there was minimal concern for Gideon. "But the personal stuff soon overshelms the professional stuff, and the personal stuff is bor-ring as show biz puts it--even Fosse's hospital nightmares, which are done as big production numbers. I've rarely been so glad to see a protagonist die. My only fear was that there would be still another number in which he tip-tapped up to the pearly gates."[130]

Though the critics found fault with the film, Fosse was satisfied with it. He stated, "I know the film is strong, but the intention was to be strong. I accomplished what I set out to do, to move people out of the ordinary movie experience. So it's a compliment to all involved that the film is being talked about."[131]

Fosse's career, from the film Sweet Charity in 1969, to All That Jazz in 1979, was marked by his fascination with movement and his cynical outlook. In 1973, Fosse became the first person to win an Oscar, Emmy, and Tony in one year. Fosse soon worked equally well on Broadway, in television, and in film. His basic approach to these entertainment media was the same. He used movement to excite his audience whether he was staging-choreographing a person or shooting-editing different camera angles.

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VI. CONCLUSION

Fosse has worked with much success on the Broadway stage, in films and on television for over thirty years. He is respected by his peers and has been honored many times. In her book America Dances, Agnes de Mille pays tribute to Fosse's Broadway contributions:

> After the initial three, Robbins, Kidd, and me, the two choreographers to make the biggest impact on the Broadway scene have been Robert Fosse and Gower Champion. Both men learned their craft in show business, and although neither has created a ballet, they know the technique of dance construction thoroughly. They have produced brilliant, inventive, and spectacular pieces that are inevitable showstoppers and that have become the dazzling ornaments of our commercial theatre, setting new standards for the field. They are directors as well and, like Robbins can establish the tone and pace of an entire musical so that the dances are of a piece with the texture.[1]

I will now summarize his major achievements.

Fosse's early dance training in his hometown of Chicago was by a vaudevillian, not a classically trained dancer. Fosse's early dance experience was in vaudeville, burlesque and nightclubs. After performing in an entertainment unit shortly after W.W.II, Fosse was discharged from the Navy in New York. He went into the road company of the second show he auditioned for, Call Me Mister, and partnered Mary Ann Niles who became his first

wife. After another tour, Make Mine Manhattan, Fosse and Niles made their Broadway debut in 1950 in Dance Me a Song. Between shows, they danced in prestigious nightclubs and were featured dancers on television. It was Fosse's second wife, Joan McCracken, whom he married in 1952, who encouraged him to become a choreographer. Through McCracken's urging, Fosse went back to school on the G.I. Bill and studied acting and dancing at the American Theater Wing for a year. This was the last formal education Fosse had. Fosse had gone to Hollywood in 1953 to become the next Kelly or Astaire but he recognized his physical limitations.

In 1954, Fosse choreographed his first Broadway show, Pajama Game. As a choreographer, Fosse became noted for his choroegraphy for trios, duos and solos. After the success of the dance number, "Steam Heat," in Pajama Game, Fosse went on to choreograph similar numbers such as "Who's Got the Pain?" in Damn Yankees, and "Mu Cha-Cha," in Bells Are Ringing. Fosse mixed sensuality with humor in his dances during this early period. "Whatever Lola Wants," in Damn Yankees, is an example. Fosse has satirically commented on society through dance in most of his shows. One way he has done this is through his choice and use of everyday movements and gestures in his choreography. The "Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo.," number in Damn Yankees is an example.

Satire is also found in his interpretation of social dances. One example is the "Mu Cha-Cha" number in Bells are Ringing. When Fosse choreographed "At the Big Check Apron Ball" in New Girl in Town, he used the whole stage for the ensemble number. During this early working period, Fosse developed a sense of when to interpolate a dance and when to integrate a dance number. Fosse successfully adapted his stage choreography in the films, The Pajama Game and Damn Yankees. In addition, he danced in and choreographed the film, My Sister Eileen.

It was a disagreement over his "Second Act Dream Ballet," in New Girl in Town, which motivated him to become a director-choreographer. In 1959, Fosse directed-choreographed Redhead which starred Gwen Verdon. Verdon, who became Fosse's third wife, is perhaps most indebted to Fosse. "Her fame is lasting and Fosse gave her a framework and support that set her off like the bright jewel she is,"[2] explained Agnes de Mille. Verdon had starred in two previous shows that Fosse had choreographed. Fosse had cleverly integrated "The Pickpocket Tango," danced by Verdon and Buzz Miller, which was used to resolve a complication in the plot. Another highlight of the show was an ensemble number which Fosse interpolated, "The Uncle Sam Rag."

As a director, Fosse used dance and movement to express what other directors might express through song

or dialogue. His overall concept of movement for How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying helped the show to win a Pulitzer Prize.

In 1962, Fosse insisted that Feuer and Martin sign with the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers before he would sign a contract to co-direct Little Me. The League of New York Theaters had voted against recognizing it. Thus, Fosse helped to gainrecognition for the organization. With Sweet Charity in 1966, Fosse choreographed more ensemble numbers rather than his usual one standout number.

Though Fosse had always been intrigued with movement, first as a choreographer and then as a director, it was with the film Sweet Charity that he overextended the potential of movement. With most of the critics comparing the fluidity of his staging to the technique of a film, it was only natural that Fosse would add to the list of his skills that of film director. The first film Fosse directed, Sweet Charity, was not an artistic nor a financial success due to Fosse's lack of control of the movement of the camera. Fosse was unable to achieve an effective concept. However, in 1972, Fosse used movement more effectively than he ever had before in film, on television, and on the stage to become the first person to win an Oscar (for Cabaret), an Emmy (for Liza with a Z) and a Tony (for Pippin) in on year. With

Cabaret, as with all of Fosse's films, much of the film in effect was created in the editing process. Fosse shot scenes numerous times from many angles. In Cabaret, the camera had been even more mobile in shooting than in Sweet Charity but Fosse was not able to successfully select his final prints. Through editing, Fosse intercut scenes in the cabaret with scenes dealing with the (dramatic) plot and maintained this approach throughout the film. Fosse had learned to pull back the camera in order to make a statement, not just to show more of a scene as he had in Sweet Charity. One example of effective camera movement within a scene in Cabaret, is his pulling of the camera back to reveal the audience's reaction to Sally's song "Maybe This Time." Another example is the camera pulling back during "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," to reveal a Hitler Youth. Later that year, Fosse combined aspects of the excitement of a live performance with aspects of film editing to create the successful television special Liza with a Z for which he won an Emmy. Fosse won his sixth Tony for the play Pippin. With Pippin, Fosse took a plot outline and enhanced it through movement.

Next, Fosse easily repeated much of the successful Liza with a Z into the concert Liza at the Winter Garden. In 1974, Fosse directed the film Lenny, the first non-musical that Fosse had directed for stage or film. Again,

the pacing of the film and the movement of the camera in individual scenes created the necessary dramatic tension. This film was edited to achieve a documentary film effect. Fosse purposefully moved the camera as he would a dancer so that many scenes seem choreographed. Honey's lesbian scene, in Lenny, does not appear pornographic due to the way Fosse sensitively used the camera movement.

One of Fosse's strengths as a director has always been his rapport with his actors. In 1974, in The Little Prince and again in 1977 in Thieves, Fosse appeared on screen to reacquaint himself with the feelings of a dancer-actor. Fosse's last book musical was Chicago. The show was translated into vaudeville acts and the plot was expressed through these acts. In 1978, Fosse exhibited his dance vocabulary in Dancin'. Without a book, Fosse summed up his interpretation of different dance styles he had used during his career. Fosse represented styles of movement from the sensitive soft shoe number, "Recollections of an Old Dancer," to the invigorating jazz routine, "Benny's Number," to the comic, "14 Feet," where movement from every part of the body except the feet was used.

The last Fosse project to date is the semi-autobiographical film, All That Jazz. As with the first film he directed, Sweet Charity, in All That Jazz, Fosse attempted to do too much. This time, it was not from

lack of experience as it had been with Sweet Charity. With All That Jazz, Fosse was overly ambitious. In an attempt to theatrically heighten the screenplay, Fosse put too many styles into one film. The styles did not blend or in any way unify into a cohesive whole. Fosse appeared to be unsuccessfully imitating Fellini. The critics admonished him for that but also realized that there were isolated spots of brilliance scattered throughout the film. This was particularly true in his use of movement. The opening audition dance sequence and later the erotic dance sequence were cited critically. Equally effective was the scene between Gideon and his daughter where Gideon expresses his feelings for his daughter through movement.

A serious flaw in All That Jazz appears to be the lack of emotion shown by the main character, a flaw noted in many of Fosse's shows, which caused critics to say that Fosse's shows were mechanical. Fosse's musicals became less emotional and more mental. Fosse's cynicism became more marked in his work. Phil Friedman explained why: "There's a bold cynical quality in some of his work and some of that reflects his opinion. He does not do a lot of sentimental things but he is a very sentimental man and he's a very sensitive man but he has a very bold cynical outlook toward the world and it's reflected in his work."[3]

Fosse, as choreographer, has been cited as having a limited dance vocabulary. Some say that it is by choice because of his personal style. Richard Korthaze, who had danced in a number Fosse choreographed in 1950 for the Colgate Comedy House and who was still dancing for Fosse in 1978 in Dancin' explained his view:

> I don't think his style has changed a great deal over the years anyway. I think what happened is that his style basically and how it evolves is the same. It just expresses itself differently depending on the type of number that he's doing in terms of his content and how it comes out of the show. But the basic way he does it and the type of physical movements themselves are in essence based on the same idea. The isolation of the body and the different rhythmic changes within a style so to speak and the basic approach to the style is always the same but of course a person does change from show to show and number to number because of the content of a number. Although, people will always say, 'Oh, we can always recognize Bobby's style.' Well, it's true, you can always recognize his style but each number is different in its way because of the content of the number both dramatically and musically.[4]

Throughout, I have cited several definitions of Fosse's dance style by different people; they all defined it in basically the same way. Time's Ted Kalem explained it: "Technically, Fosse tends to favor the pelvic thrust, the rapidly undulating behind, the body shimmy, the quick alternating shoulder dip, the swiveling head and the massed chorus strut complete with very high kicks. Out of the fusion of these movements, Fosse has won his crown as the choreographer-king of sensuality."[5] Fosse

realizes his limitations as a choreographer: "I think my choreography is getting better. I have a lot of limitations, but within those limitations, I seem to be using it and stretching in different ways. Yet, I still feel "I'm getting away with something. I feel sometimes I've been very lucky, that I know a few slight-of-hand things and I've fooled everyone into thinking it takes a lot more than that, that pretty soon they'll see where you're getting the rabbit from the whole act is over."[6]

Fosse has always worked slowly and painstakingly both as a director and as a choreographer. He is flexible as a director in getting the results he wants from his actors. He can give them suggestions, specific directions, improvisations, or tricks, if necessary. As a director, Fosse became more and more involved in the various aspects of his plays and movies. In the beginning of his career, Fosse tried to see how he could best serve the show. Later in his career, Fosse was concerned with how a show could best serve his ideas. Fosse gained confidence and his associates learned to trust him more over the years. However, Fosse clung to the subject that he knew best, that of show business. From the vaudeville subplot in Redhead in 1959 to the semi-autobiographical life of Fosse himself in All That Jazz in 1979, aspects of show business may be found.

Fosse has confessed, "I'm definitely attracted to stories about show business because I know more about that world than any other. . . . I feel comfortable there. I don't have to research a dressing room in a cheap vaudeville theater, because I've been there. I know showbiz types--their ambitions, dreams and underpinnings."[7]

In spite of limitations, Phil Friedman thinks that Fosse is the greatest single creative talent in show business active in the theater and that Fosse has no peer in the theatre today. Friedman has explained:

> He has a soaring imagination. His imagination is endless; the things that he can think up to do and the ways to do it are just remarkable to watch him work.
>
> The second thing is that he is a quintessant showman. He has an absolute instinct for what will work and what won't work and when he's directing or choreographing, he knows when he's doing something, whether it's going to work or whether it isn't. He takes it out if it isn't going to work and very rarely does he have to change numbers in shows when he's out-of-town. He has to work on the book and fix this and do that but he rarely has to change numbers out-of-town besides refining and editing them because his instincts are so good in the rehearsal room. He's a great showman. He knows what will work and what won't.[8]

Fosse has improved and expanded his skills over the years, and has been an innovator in dealing with the elements of the musical on the stage, in film, and on television. He is unique in that he has had artistic control in all three media. Though critics have not

always lavished praise on some of his projects, they have always singled out some aspects of his work which soared beyond the norm. His has been a valued contribution to the performance media.

NOTES

[1] Agnes de Mille, America Dances (New York: McMillan, 1980), p. 193.

[2] de Mille, p. 194.

[3] Phil Friedman, Phone Interview, 21 Jan. 1983.

[4] Richard Korthaze, Phone Interview, 27 Oct. 1982.

[5] T. E. Kalem, "The Theater," Time, 16 June 1975, p. 68.

[6] Bob Fosse, Interview by Christine Arnold, "The Dance Man," The Miami Herald, 2 March 1980, Section L, p. 61.

[7] Bob Fosse, Interview by Barbara Lovenheim, "Show-business Shows Are Big Business," The New York Times, 28 Dec. 1980, Section D, p. 5.

[8] Friedman.

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