

GALATEA: THE VIVIFICATION OF MUSICAL DRAMA

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GALATEA: THE VIVIFICATION OF MUSICAL DRAMA

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Gwendolyn Hale White
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ABSTRACT

Musical drama, a serious and important dramatic form, is good art as well as good theatre. The form has developed more fully in the United States than in any other country and is today widely recognized as a peculiarly "American" art form.

Drama consists of six parts which determine its quality. These six parts and their order of importance in the musical theatre are: Song, Character, Plot, Thought, Diction, and Spectacle. Song is the most important element since it is through this medium that much of the weight of Character, Plot, Thought, Spectacle, and mood is carried. Through the use of Song, the musical theatre is able to accomplish almost anything dramatic, and, thereby, can make complete use of the theatre.

My Fair Lady has firmly established itself as one of the most artistic and successful productions in the American musical theatre. This play incorporates the working principles of musical drama better than any other one play of the genre. Song is used as soliloquy, imparts philosophical comment, serves to establish mood and theme, reveals the character development of Eliza and Higgins, enhances plot development, and combines rhythm and melody to create a unified and coherent whole--one that comes close to perfection on the musical stage.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Gwendolyn Hale White entitled "Galatea: the Vivification of Musical Drama." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

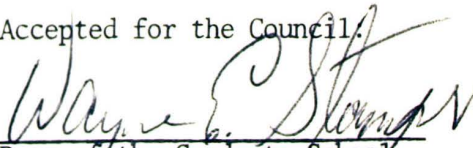

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:


Second Committee Member


Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council.


Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

PRELUDE

I

Musical drama, most commonly thought of as mere entertainment, is a serious and important dramatic form. It can be good art as well as good theatre, and is, therefore, much more than a vehicle for eye-filling and ear-filling entertainment. The best of musical drama contains dramatic truth, sharp-lined characterizations, effective background and atmosphere, logical story lines, and music and lyrics that are integral to the play. Music, of course, is the "soul" of the form and breeds emotion as well as structure.

Although the term, "musical comedy," is most often associated with the musical theatre, the designation, if not a complete misnomer, seems to be less than adequate. The term was probably introduced to distinguish this form from the operetta and other earlier forms from which musical drama developed (i.e., revue, variety show, burlesque). Because of the way the form has developed into not only good theatre, but good art, it seems more reasonable to call the form "popular musical drama" or the "musical theatre." "Musical play," "musical comedy," and simply "musical" are some terms used by recent critics in describing the new form. There seems to be no differentiation in the terms, however, and the designations are arbitrary. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that for those plays which incorporate the elements set forth in this study, the terms musical drama or the musical theatre would combine

all previous terms and would also carry the connotation of aesthetic value which is so fully deserved by the form.

Musical drama makes complete use of the resources of the theatre, and it is the purpose of this study to examine the "essence" of this dramatic genre, its elements, its form, and its potential for affecting the audience. The study aims at being descriptive rather than prescriptive.

After a brief survey of the historical development of musical drama, an examination will be made of the following: the six parts of dramatic form in their order of importance in musical drama; the place of the overture and opening number; the process of revealing character through Song; kinds of Song utilized and their effects; and tempo and dynamic levels of the music and their relationship to mood. The effect of distance will also be given consideration. Finally, an in-depth study of My Fair Lady will be made in an effort to illustrate the active principles of the form.

Almost all of the scholarship in the musical theatre has dealt with plays in chronological sequence or in groups by composer and librettist. Most of the criticism is very general and much of it is superficial. There are several good volumes for general reference material, but little of the criticism, including newspaper and magazine coverage, goes into what actually constitutes the essence of musical drama.

Lehman Engel has said that "as an art form, the musical stage is entitled to serious consideration."¹ This study intends to give that

¹Lehman Engel, The American Musical Theater: A Consideration (New York: Davis and Delaney, 1958), p. xi.

serious consideration to which musical drama is entitled as an important modern dramatic form and to examine examples of the best of modern musical drama.

The plays chosen for illustrating this study have not been selected arbitrarily but were selected because each seems to incorporate some significant aspect of the best of the contemporary American musical theatre in music, lyrics, structure, or plot and because they represent what musical drama can accomplish in the theatre. Each of the seven plays chosen is different in subject matter, in style, and in theme. They even differ, as do other modern plays, in their calculated effect on the audience, but they all share the same basic elements.

West Side Story (1957) is included because of its essentially tragic elements and Damn Yankees (1955) because it is comedy based on the tragedy of Faust. South Pacific (1949) deserves consideration because of its comic main plot and tragic subplot and Fiddler on the Roof (1964) because of its ethnic yet universal connotations and its tragi-comic elements. Brigadoon (1947) bears examination because of its use of new myth, the creation of Alan J. Lerner, and Oklahoma! (1943) because of its primary position in the history of modern musical theatre. My Fair Lady (1956) will be discussed last and studied in greatest depth since it is widely regarded as the best all-round product of the contemporary musical theatre and includes all of the working principles essential to the dramatic form.

II

Popular musical drama has developed more fully in the United States than in any other country and is today widely recognized as a peculiarly "American" art form. Its growth has been influenced by other dramatic forms as well as by practical necessity (the necessity of satisfying the public); and the form which has now emerged suggests a gradual, somewhat haphazard, process of development. Musical drama evolved slowly, selecting, improving, rejecting, adding, and deleting elements of existing forms in a continuous progression toward the form which exists today.

The early hit musicals, from the 1866 production of The Black Crook through such productions as Pins and Needles and No No Nanette of the 1930's, were very different from today's complex musical dramas. During the nineteenth century there was a wide range of musical theatricals including minstrel shows, extravaganzas, pantomimes, and operettas. In the United States, variety shows began in saloons with almost exclusively male patrons. They soon moved into the Music Halls and there spawned two forms of musical progeny: vaudeville and burlesque.

Vaudeville was made up of singing, dancing, instrumental music, and other kinds of short, independent acts. Burlesque in the 1880's was family entertainment satirizing current stage attractions, popular fictions, or well-known public figures. The general form of burlesque continued, but the name came to be associated with entertainment for men only.² The traditions of vaudeville and burlesque contributed

²Cecil Smith, Musical Comedy in America (New York: Theatre Arts, 1950), passim.

eventually to the musical drama. For example, the soft-shoe routine, "Those Were the Good Old Days," in Damn Yankees, is reminiscent of vaudeville and the topical song, "America," in West Side Story is similar to those songs sung in burlesque.

Minstrel shows followed a standard format. They were divided into three parts and contained songs and dances, sketches and jokes, scenery and costumes based on what was supposed to represent southern Negro folklore. The first part of the show began with a parade of men in blackface who sat in a semi-circle and told jokes and sang songs. The second part, similar to vaudeville, was divided into acts. The third part was usually a parody on a play or opera, or was a sentimental operetta about southern Negro life on the plantation.³ The influence of minstrel shows on the modern musical drama included the use of local color in such songs as "Ol' Man River" from Show Boat.

These early musical shows were fumbling, gaudy, makeshift, and relatively formless. For more sophisticated and complex dramatic entertainment the American musical theatre had to depend at first on operettas imported from Europe. The operetta was a short, light opera, usually with gay, lilting music, dialogue spoken or sung, and an essentially comic plot almost invariably ending in a marriage.

With the advent of World War I, the importing of European operettas was no longer possible and the musical theatre of the United States was left on its own. This proved to be a blessing in disguise as the musical theatre now began to develop the style which has come to be regarded as the unique contribution of America to world drama. Simplicity and directness began to replace the formality and the long

³Engel, p. 5.

and involved scenes of the European operetta.

Besides the development of musical form, the librettos of musical shows were also undergoing changes. The traditional absurdity of musical books, with their broad comedy, pasteboard characters, and mythical settings, was driving the new, educated generation of Americans out of the theater. Librettists were also becoming increasingly aware of the need for more plausible plots, identifiable characters and settings--in short, for something more nearly approaching the life around them.⁴

It seems that the musical theatre had to depart from its traditions for a time in order to shed the undesirable characteristics with which it had become associated. One of the characteristics dropped temporarily was the use of mythical settings and action. The eventual return of musical drama to the use of myth became important in its maturity in such dramas as Brigadoon, a new myth, and My Fair Lady, based on the old Pygmalion legend.

The productions of the early 1900's were lavish revues and extravaganzas, full of splendid and flamboyant scenery and young girls with pretty legs, full bosoms, and empty heads. In 1927, however, Jerome Kern dispensed with the conventional pretty-girl chorus in his landmark musical, Show Boat, based on the novel by Edna Ferber. In Show Boat the foundation was laid for the more serious musical productions of the present. Reviewing Show Boat, Stark Young accurately predicted: "Some of its best numbers are so successful in their combination of the theatrical elements, music, acting, scene, as to suggest openings for the development not of mere musical comedy, but of popular opera."⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 30.

⁵Stanley Green, The World of Musical Comedy (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1968), p. 79.

It is true that Show Boat opened the doors and led the way for future musical productions and became a link between the past and future in the development of the musical drama, but it was far from aesthetic perfection. "The characters were two-dimensional, the proportions were outrageous, the plot development was predictable and corny, and the ending was unbearably sweet."⁶

III

When Oklahoma! appeared in 1943, the concept of the musical theatre was changed more radically than with any other one previous production. Show Boat could not bear comparison with Oklahoma! in unity and seriousness. The story and songs of Oklahoma! were inseparable, and the ballet, used in a musical for the first time in Rodeo, incorporated fragments of song from the rest of the play. The ballet scene also helped heighten the dramatic effect with a new emphasis on character study, revealing the subconscious fears and desires of the leading characters. No previous musical play measured up to Oklahoma! in the integration of plot and music.

In this show Rodgers and Hammerstein integrated every element into a marvelous unity--songs, dances, plot, people. All worked together, each advancing and explaining the other, making the musical comedy a complete form rather than the disconnected, stale melange of tunes, comedy routines, and corny love passages it had been.⁷

Oklahoma!'s innovations have made it a milestone which marks the beginning of modern musical drama and make it indispensable to a study such as this.

⁶Engel, p. 39.

⁷Seymour Peck, "Broadway Says it with Musicals," New York Times Magazine (February 6, 1955), p. 24.

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This brief survey of the development of musical drama, from the first relatively formless revues to the aesthetically satisfying productions of the modern musical theatre, merely serves to show that musical drama in contemporary America was not suddenly thrust on the dramatic stage. It was created by a long and slow process and the form that has emerged from its development will now be studied and an attempt will be made to determine the "essence" of this dramatic form.

CHAPTER II

FORMULA AND FANTASIA

Drama consists of six parts which determine its quality. These six parts were first outlined by Aristotle in the Poetics in his description of Greek tragedy. According to Aristotle, the order of importance of these six parts in Greek tragedy was Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song, and Spectacle.¹ Aristotle was describing tragedy, but in other dramatic forms the order of importance would not be the same. The elements of comedy would take one order and those of modern tragicomedy another. The order of importance in musical drama is different from any other form, and it is necessary to discuss these six parts and their order of importance in the musical theatre.

Song, which includes lyrics, music, and the dance, in the musical theatre becomes the first in importance and is the "soul" of the genre.² Music contains the most powerful elements of emotional interest. In some instances, the songs become soliloquies, but in musical rather than in spoken form. Thus a character may think out loud in Song and, as in verbal soliloquies, it is possible for the audience to enter the character's mind. Song may also function as the address to the audience in the same manner that the chorus in the Greek theatre often speaks the truth and wisdom that the playwright is trying to communicate.

¹Aristotle, "Poetics," Criticism: the Major Texts, ed. Walter Jackson Bate (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952), p. 23.

²It may be noted that the dance belongs to two parts of the musical theatre--Song and Spectacle.

In Fiddler on The Roof, by Joseph Stein, Tevye sings "If I Were a Rich Man." The song is a soliloquy which gives the audience insight into Tevye's humor, affirms his religious background, and the fact that he still has faith in God even though he lives amid poverty and misfortune. "As the Good Book says, 'Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed.'"³

Lord who made the lions and the lamb,
You decreed I should be what I am,
Would it spoil some vast, eternal plan--
If I were a wealthy man?

(FR, p. 11)

The villagers in this play function, also, as the Greek chorus does, both literally and figuratively. The song, "Tradition," sung by virtually everyone in the village, emphasizes the past importance of tradition and ironically foreshadows the breaking of tradition later in the play. Tevye and Papas begin the song:

Who, day and night,
Must scramble for a living,
Feed a wife and children,
Say his daily prayers?
And who has the right,
As master of the house
To have the final word at home?

(FR, p. 4)

The refrain is sung by all: "The papa, the papa--Tradition" (FR, p. 4). The final words of the song are eventually given back to Tevye, who quiets the villagers with his thematic words of "wisdom": "Tradition. Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as-- as a fiddler on the roof" (FR, p. 10). This song sets the stage for

³Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock, and Sheldon Harnick, Fiddler on the Roof (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965), p. 34. All subsequent quotations from this source will be indicated by FR and incorporated into the body of the text.

the family and for everyone in the village of Anatevka where tradition rules. The papa makes the living and is master of the house; the mama makes the house a "proper home . . . a kosher home"; the sons go to Hebrew school and learn a trade; and the daughters learn to 'mend and tend and fix."

Preparing them to marry
Whoever Papa picks.

(FR, p. 65)

With all this tradition, the importance of which has been established through Song, the audience sees that the Family is the unshakable basic unit in this village, a unit virtually impossible to change.

Oscar Hammerstein has said that "it is nonsense to say what a musical should or should not be. . . . There is only one absolutely indispensable element that a musical must have. It must have music."⁴ This element of music is evident even before the action of the play begins and continues in importance until the very end.

The overture and opening number are extremely important in the musical theatre. They help to set the mood and the theme for the play, and therefore may be considered a part of the setting. The overture is made up of parts taken from the songs, melodies, and dance numbers of the entire play and molded into an integrated whole which tells the entire story of the play in mood and tone. The overture acts as a prologue to action and may be lively, sad, light, powerful, melodious, or cacophonous, either entirely or alternately as the mood of the play dictates. The overture is common to every musical drama and functions also to set the audience in the right frame of mind to respond

⁴Green, p. 7.

emotionally to the play. Thus the music may affect the aesthetic distance from the very beginning of the play.

The opening number in a musical drama, as well as the overture, helps set the mood, but the opening number usually accomplishes much more than the overture in furthering plot, providing exposition, foreshadowing, philosophical comment, thematic motifs, and characterization.

In Damn Yankees, the opening number, sung alternately between Meg and Joe (a couple in their forties) and the men and women of the neighborhood, presents opposing points of view about baseball. Six months out of every year Joe is totally wrapped up in baseball:

(Strike three
Ball four
Walk a run'll tie the score
Fly ball
Double play
Yankees win again today.
Those Damn Yankees
Why can't we beat 'em
Yer blind ump,
Yer blind ump, you must be out of your mind, ump.)⁵

And Meg is left a baseball widow:

Six months out of every year
I might as well be made of stone
Six months out of every year, when I'm with him
I'm alone.

(DY, p. 5)

Behind the facade of a musical number, Joe's obsession with baseball and his hopes of beating the Yankees are set up. The song establishes Meg as accustomed to having Joe "gone" half the time; therefore, his

⁵George Abbott, et al., Damn Yankees (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 6. All subsequent quotations from this source will be indicated by DY and incorporated into the body of the text.

upcoming disappearance will not be such a blow to her. It is also important for the audience to get the full impact of just how great Joe's obsession with baseball really is so that his selling his soul to the devil in exchange for becoming a great baseball player will not be too absurd.

South Pacific begins with a simple and happy French song sung by Emile's daughter Ngana.

Dites-moi
Pourquoi
La vie est belle.
Dites-moi
Pourquoi,
Chere mad'mosielle,
Est-ce que
Parce que
Vous m'aimez?⁶

This simple lyric melody is indicative of the theme of the play--love makes life beautiful, particularly on a South Pacific island where time seems to stand still.

The opening of Brigadoon is veiled in the mysterious. The song is only heard in the distant background offstage.

Once in the Highlands, the Highlands of Scotland,
Deep in the night on a murky brae;
There in the Highlands, the Highlands of Scotland,
Two weary hunters lost their way.
And this is what happened,
The strange thing that happened
To two weary hunters who lost their way.⁷

⁶Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, II, and Joshua Logan, South Pacific, in Representative American Plays, ed. Arthur Hobson Quinn, 7th ed. (New York:Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957), p. 1203. All subsequent quotations from this source will be indicated by SP and incorporated into the body of the text.

⁷Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, Brigadoon, in The Best Plays of 1946-1947, ed. Burns Mantle (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1947), p. 371. All subsequent quotations from this source will be indicated by BD and incorporated into the body of the text.

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This song echoes the function of the old Greek chorus in beginning the exposition and it also introduces the element of mystery which contrasts with the every-day realism of the first lines of dialogue. This combination of the supernatural and the natural continues throughout the remainder of the play.

And so musical drama begins--introduced by songs which are much more than mere momentary entertainment. The audience is given the mood, the setting, and some insights into future action and, sometimes, the beginning of characterization.

Closely interrelated with Song is Character, which occupies the second most important position of the six parts in musical drama. Character, in the musical theatre, is most often revealed through the medium of Song. It is very difficult to know exactly what makes up the psychological construct of a character simply through action or dialogue. Dialogue may be veiled in half-truths and action may be for appearances. To get to the core of an individual's thoughts and feelings, it is necessary that he convey his real attitudes and his conscious and subconscious motivation. It is, therefore, possible to travel inside a character through the lyric expression of Song more effectively than through a spoken soliloquy since modern audiences tend to find spoken soliloquies uncomfortable. Thoughts are thus expressed out loud, bared for the audience, but in a comfortable and pleasing manner. Further, the musical qualities of Song reinforce the emotional statement.

Through Song, Nellie, in South Pacific, is able to shout her protestations of love and not be ashamed of the way she feels:

I'm as corny as Kansas in August
 I'm as normal as blueberry pie.
 No more a smart little girl with no heart
 I have found me a wonderful guy.

(SP, p. 1220)

When Nellie tells us, "with radiant good nature, 'I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love with a wonderful guy, 'one doesn't murmur [sic] 'Who cares?' but 'Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations to you both!'"⁸ The vibrancy and radiance felt by Nellie are observed more easily when she sings of her love than if she had merely told her friends, "I'm in love."

Music also makes it possible to understand the thoughts in Joe Boyd's mind when he sings to Meg in Damn Yankees:

Goodbye, old girl . . .
 When you awaken I'll be gone . . .
 There's something I must let you know,
 I haven't said it much,
 I guess I've lost my touch,
 But, my old girl, I love you so. . . .
 (DY, p. 9)

Joe cannot say these words out loud to Meg, but through lyrics and melody the audience is able to understand exactly how Joe feels about her. His feeling and a necessary foreshadowing of the eventual outcome are illustrated also when he sings:

. . . now your Joe has to go.
 But he'll come back to you again,
 So sleep your sleep, old girl,
 Our love will keep, old girl, till then.
 (DY, p. 9)

Joe is singing to himself and to sleeping Meg, and the audience is able to eavesdrop on his mental conversation.

⁸Green, p. 277.

The same sort of communication is felt by the audience when Tony in West Side Story sings:

Maria!

I've just met a girl named Maria.
And suddenly that name
Will never be the same
To me.⁹

Tony is alone as he sings, and it is his thoughts that the audience hears, those thoughts which he could never say "aloud," but which are a necessary part of the continuing theme of the play. Essentially, a song like this serves the same purpose as a soliloquy. A character can sometimes reveal himself to the audience through Song in a way he could not do in straight drama. Jud Fry in Oklahoma! comes across as a villain, but in the lyrics of his song, one notes a difference:

But when there's a moon in my winder
And it slants down a beam 'crost my bed . . .
And a dream starts a-dancin' in my head . . .
And the girl that I want
Ain't afraid of my arms . . .
And her long yeller hair
Falls acrost my face
Jist like the rain in a storm!¹⁰

Here it is possible to see Jud as 'no longer a sniveling, frightening, hideous, threatening misfit, but a pathetic human being. We recognize his dream, and we pity him even as we fear him."¹¹ This means of delineating character is one of the great advantages of musical drama in the modern theatre where modes of expressing subjective material are very scarce.

⁹Jerome Robbins, et al., West Side Story, in Theatre Arts (October, 1959), p. 40. All subsequent quotations from this source will be indicated by WSS and incorporated into the body of the text.

¹⁰Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, II, Oklahoma!, Columbia Recording, No. CL 828. Produced for records by Goddard Lieberson.

¹¹Engel, p. 105.

Along with the particular inner thoughts of a character expressed at a given moment in the play, character change is expressed through Song. One of the best examples of changing attitudes is seen in Joe Boyd in Damn Yankees. At the beginning of the play, Joe is completely obsessed with baseball six months out of every year. He doesn't hear his wife talking to him and barely even notices that she lives in the same house:

JOE: Good old Smokey, he got a hit.

MEG: In Hannibal they were always saying cool air was on its way from Canada. I certainly don't see any sign of it here, do you? (No reply) Do you?

JOE: Do I what?

MEG: See any sign of cool air . . . ?

JOE: You're blind, Ump. You're blind. See any sign of what, dear?

MEG: Never mind. It wasn't important. . . .

JOE: Strike three, ball four. . . .
 Yer blind Ump
 Yer blind Ump
 Ya mus' be out-a-yer mind, Ump!
 (DY, p. 4)

When Joe prepares to take his place among baseball greats as Joe Hardy, he realizes how much he does love his wife, but baseball still remains uppermost in his mind:

Goodbye old girl . . .
 My old girl
 Goodbye.
 (DY, p. 8)

After a taste of the baseball life, Joe finally begins to realize that his wife and his old way of life are much more important to him than anything else:

A man doesn't know what he has until he loses it
When a man has the love of a woman he abuses it.
I didn't know what I had when I had my old love . . .

But the happy thought is,
Whatever it is he's lost, may some day once again be found.
(DY, p. 98)

After it seems that Joe's soul is lost forever, he slips away from Meg for the time being and turns to Lola for comfort. They sing together:

Two lost souls on the highway of life . . .
But ain't it just great, ain't it just grand?
We've got each other!

(DY, p. 148)

In spite of Lola's sex appeal and Joe's obsession with baseball, he still wants to go home to his wife. Thus when Joe loses his soul, Applegate wants to make sure that the Senators do not win the game against the Yankees. In his last desperate attempt to make them lose, Applegate turns Joe back to his old self as he is running to catch the ball. He manages to make one last lunge, catch the ball, and win the game. It is at this point that he knows he has won over the devil as well as himself and can now return to his wife with no regrets. Applegate returns to tempt him, but Joe is adamant:

. . . the happy thought is
Whatever it is that's lost
May some day once again
Be
Found!

(DY, p. 163)

The third part of musical drama is Plot, which includes action, both physical and psychological. Plot takes this lesser position in musical drama and, in many instances, serves only to hold the play together from one musical number to another. Plot actually includes Song,

and in this genre, it cannot exist without it. No musical drama can succeed totally on the quality of the music and lyrics alone; they must be an integral and highly important part of the over-all fabric of the production, the lyric expression of the play's general development. Without the integration of mood, thought, and theme, which Song, in musical drama provides, the Plot would lack form and meaning. The following example from Brigadoon shows how the integration of Song and Plot is accomplished:

After the overture and opening number, Tommy Albright and Jeff Douglas hear the strains of a song, "Brigadoon," from a distance. Suddenly a village comes into being before their very eyes. There, at a fair, they come upon Fiona MacLaren and her sister Jean, who is about to be married to Charlie Dalrymple. Jean, who doesn't agree with the other girls of the village in their ambition to marry whoever will have them, expresses her idea in a song, "Waitin' for My Dearie." Charlie Dalrymple enters the scene and shows his gratitude to Jean in "I'll Go Home With Bonnie Jean." Tommy is enchanted with Fiona and insists on helping her gather heather for her sister's wedding. He wins her consent after singing to her a ballad, "The Heather on the Hill," which she repeats. Here the song specifically furthers the development of the Plot. Following the wedding ceremony of Jean and Charlie, Tommy tells Fiona how much he loves her in "There but for You Go I," and because of that love he is determined to remain in Brigadoon forever, come what may.

Brooks Atkinson said of the play, "the plot works beautifully. [The play] does not get down to the details of the fairy story until the audience has already been won by the pleasant characters, the exuberant

music, and the prim though fiery dances. After that the incantation is complete and easy."¹²

The Plots of most contemporary musical dramas make use of pre-existing material, usually a drama, a novel, or a myth. West Side Story is based on Romeo and Juliet and the musical drama, like the play, is based on the assumption that the lovers are trapped by fate. In West Side Story, their desire to live beyond that society--in the community of love--is not enough to free them. Oklahoma! comes from Lynn Rigg's play, Green Grow the Lilacs and South Pacific from Tales of the South Pacific, a collection of short stories by James A. Michener. Damn Yankees is a comic reversal of the tragic story of Faust, and, like Faust, Joe Boyd sells his soul to the devil. Joe, however, regains his soul. Fiddler on the Roof is based on Sholom Aleichem's novel, Tevye's Daughters. Brigadoon is the only one of the plays in this study which was not derived from a previous work. The story in Brigadoon was created to simulate that of a myth--one that would be perfectly plausible as Scottish legend.

The musical numbers are woven into the Plot, keeping the action fluid as the play progresses from speech to Song and back again. Song, besides transmitting Character and Plot, conveys the theme and philosophical elements of the play, i.e., Thought which becomes the fourth part in order of importance in the musical theatre. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, "Music . . . if regarded as an expression of

¹²David Ewen, New Complete Book of the American Musical Theater (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 57.

the world, is in the highest degree a universal language, which is related indeed to the universality of concepts, much as these are related to the particular things."¹³ The core of Thought is expressed in Song, and it is possible to discern the depth of the play from the verse and harmonic element of Song alone.

The world of Fiddler on the Roof is the world of the East European Jew. It contains songs which achieve an Eastern European Jewish flavor by using an augmented or diminished musical interval discreetly here and there and a Hebraic turn of phrase. Tevye explains that everybody in the town lives a dangerous existence while trying to earn a living. These Jews stay in Anatevka because it is their town, and the thing that binds them together is explained in "Tradition." The religious convictions of these people is expressed in the songs, "Good Sabbath," and "Sabbath Prayer." These are a people filled with exuberance ("L'Chaim' To Life"), sentimentality ("Sunrise, Sunset"), humor ("If I Were a Rich Man"), and love ("Do you Love Me?"), and their outlook on life is thus best expressed in Song.

Diction means dialogue in the musical theatre and is the fifth part. The libretto contains all the words in a musical play. It is the bare outline to which is added the music, dance, and spectacle. The libretto, published in book form, serves as a less than adequate substitute for the full musical drama--which in reading can only be staged in the imagination. Reading the libretto, however, and listening

¹³Friedrich Nietzsche, from The Birth of Tragedy, in Tragedy: A Critical Anthology, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1971), p. 755.

to a sound track from the play at the same time, comes close to being of as much value as seeing the production staged because the integration of dialogue, action, and music can be felt.

Librettos must, for time's sake, be shortened from original sources, e.g., West Side Story does not contain as many words as Romeo and Juliet. It takes more time to sing a number than to speak words which would say the same thing, but this, of course, is justified by the added value of the musical statement.

Lyrics and melody can "often instantly create an atmosphere, set a mood, or convey a spirit that it would require a great many words to do. Sometimes a single song or duet can do the work of a whole scene of dialogue in a play."¹⁴ In South Pacific, girls are sometimes very much on the minds of the American sailors. They complain that the absence of females in their lives represents a very serious gap, for, as they complain in "There is Nothin' Like a Dame," there is just no substitute for the opposite sex. This song establishes the longing and desires of all the sailors and would have taken up a long and boring scene had it been presented in conversation. It universalizes the experience and functions like the Greek chorus, especially since it allows for men of all ages and types to express the same basic need. But dialogue is necessary in a musical drama because it helps to further the action and serves as a connecting link from one Song to another.

From the opening number, "Tradition," in Fiddler on the Roof, to the second number, "Matchmaker," there is very little dialogue--only enough to bridge the gap between songs and begin the plot movement. The

¹⁴Engel, p. 77.

most important thing in the village of Anatevka is tradition, and the most important tradition is that young people are brought together for marriage by the "matchmaker" through arrangement with the parents. The second song follows naturally from the first and the dialogue which comes between is only an interlude.

The same is true in West Side Story, where the opening number is half danced and half mimed with occasional phrases of dialogue and is primarily a communication of the growing rivalry between two teen-age gangs, the Jets and the Sharks. The Sharks are Puerto Ricans and the Jets "an anthology of what is called American" (WSS, p. 34). The opening suggests the evil that will be constantly growing between the two gangs during the course of the play, and the second number mirrors very clearly the loyalty felt by each member of the Jets to the group.

When you're a Jet
You're a Jet all the way
From your first cigarette
To your last dying day.
(WSS, p. 36)

The second number, in no uncertain terms, shows the determination of the Jets to destroy the growth of Puerto Ricans and their influence. This can only be possible if the members of the gang are truly committed. This song, then, makes clear the nature and extent of the play's basic conflict.

The dialogue between the first and second songs in Brigadoon is mundane in contrast with the suggestion of the mysterious which permeated the opening number. The dialogue is used to establish a "typical" street scene in a small village of the eighteenth century. Real people are talking, but the supernatural overtone is reasserted because of the time element--the eighteenth century village is in a twentieth century setting.

The second number, "Waitin' for My Dearie," brings the supernatural back into central focus and subordinates the natural.

I hold a dream an' there's no compromisin':
I know there's one certain laddie for me.
One day he'll come walking o'er the horizon;

. . .
Though I'll live forty lives
Till the day he arrives
I'll not ever, ever grieve.
For my hopes will be high
That he'll come strollin' by;

(BD, p. 374)

This is not to say that the weight of the supernatural is carried only by Song, but that the weight of the play, in which the supernatural plays a great part, is carried by Song.

Dialogue, then, becomes a connecting element in the musical theatre, the bridge that serves to connect one musical statement to another. As the musical numbers help carry the theme of the play, dialogue helps carry the action of the play. Plot tends to stand still during Song.

The last element in order of importance in the musical theatre is Spectacle. Scenery and costumes carry much emotional attraction in a musical drama because they help to position the play in its own setting. Color, or lack of color, helps to further the emotional and psychological impact on the audience. Spectacle must be true to the setting of the play, to the mood and thematic development of the play, and to the characters which are being presented. In Fiddler on the Roof, for example, there is no pretty scenery, no pretty costumes, no pretty girls, and no pretty story. In Oklahoma!, Spectacle (including costume and scenery) represents the lack of pretension, simplicity and charm of the western Indian country before Oklahoma became a state. In South

Pacific, Spectacle is able to help define the attitudes of the French landowners, the native inhabitants, and the American servicemen.

The six elements just discussed are common to every dramatic form although they vary in order of importance. Musical drama, however, carries additional elements, almost all associated in some way with Song and which function in a general way. Musical drama capitalizes on motion and rhythm, transporting the vitality of life to the stage through the medium of Song. A striking example of this vitality is seen in one of Tevye's songs in Fiddler on the Roof. While Tevye drives his cart home for supper, he begins a one-way conversation with God, asking Him why He found it necessary to make him a poor man. He realizes that "it's no shame to be poor, but it's no great honor either." This leads him to think of what he would do if he were rich, developing his dreams in the song, "If I Were a Rich Man," a song that is vibrant and full, simple and true to human nature.

If I were a rich man
Daidle deedle daidle
Digguh digguh deedle daidle hum.
All day long I'd biddy biddy bum,
If I were a wealthy man.
(FR, p. 24)

According to Walter Kerr, "The effect is what we all had in mind when we last thought of satisfaction in depth,"¹⁵ a good example of how Song can express universal experience.

In West Side Story, the wedding scene between Maria and Tony could only be accomplished as effectively as it is through lyrics and melody. When Maria and Tony meet, it is a case of love at first sight, and they pledge eternal love on the tenement fire escape. Then they plan to meet

¹⁵Green, p. 367.

in the bridal shop where Maria is employed when the place is closed to customers and, when they do, they improvise a mock marriage--with dress dummies as wedding attendants. It is a simple, happy scene, but it is charged with emotion;

Make of our hands one hand
 Make of our hearts one heart
 Make of our vows one last vow

. . .
 Make of our lives one life,
 Day after day, one life
 Now it begins, now we start
 One hand, one heart--
 Even death won't part us now.

(WSS, p. 46)

The scene is outwardly a game and if the words had only been spoken, the vows would have remained nothing but a game. It becomes increasingly apparent, however, that much greater meaning lies in the depth of what is being sung. This is the only wedding Maria and Tony will know and, therefore, the fatality suggested in this scene has great impact on the audience. A kind of magic ensues from the simple yet haunting melody and the vows become real; an actual wedding is taking place--performed by Maria and Tony. Although the poetic element of musical drama, exemplified in the lyrics of songs, is the most important to character, theme, symbolism, and emotion, the melodic and harmonic half of Song conveys its own meaning through mood, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics.

The mood of a musical number is affected by and affects the scene in which the number becomes an integral part. The song, "To Life," in Fiddler on the Roof, celebrates the joie de vivre. The tempo is brisk and vibrant, and there is a lifting quality in the mood as the men dance and sing faster and faster and louder and louder until they break in a wild finale and pile up on the bar. The scene is happy, the mood is

happy, and thus a circling interaction is produced--the mood creating the song, and the song creating the mood. Later in the play the mood is almost completely reversed in the reminiscences of "Sunrise, Sunset." This scene is also happy, but it is the happiness of quiet emotion when tears of joy are not uncommon. Tzeitel is getting married and Tevye and Golde take time to be peacefully sentimental.

Sunrise, sunset,
 Sunrise, sunset,
 Swiftly fly the years.
 One season following another,
 Laden with happiness and tears.
 (FR, p. 98)

The tempo is adagio, the dynamics piano, adding warmth and tenderness to the already hushed and touching scene.

Slow tempos and soft music tend to parallel peaceful and tender scenes while faster tempos and louder music are associated with action and the kind of emotions that lead to action. This formula for mood can be applied to any of the best contemporary musical dramas. For example, the mood of West Side Story can be traced completely through the dynamic and tempo levels of the musical numbers as follows:

allegro	"Jet Song"	fortissimo
andante	"Someting's Coming"	mezzo-forte
andantino	"Maria"	mezzo-piano
adagio	"Tonight"	mezzo-piano
portamento	"America"	mezzo-piano
agitato	"Cool"	forte
largo	"One Hand, One Heart"	pianissimo
allegretto	"I Feel Pretty"	mezzo-forte

grazioso

"Somewhere"

piano

animato

"Gee Officer Krupke!"

forte

rapido

"A Boy Like That"

forte

"One Hand, One Heart," for example, should be sung largo or slowly and it should be pianissimo or very quiet and tender. There are a few places in the score where a slight crescendo is indicated as in "Make of our vows one last vow," but a diminuendo follows immediately in "only death will part us now." Toward the end of the song, a crescendo and an accelerando is indicated in "Now it begins, Now we start," until it breaks suddenly in the forte "One heart." The rest of the song continues to get gradually softer and slower until it fades into silence.

Included in both Song and Spectacle is the dance, used effectively and quite extensively in the musical theatre. Its most innovative form is in the ballet scene in Oklahoma! where the background music is composed of fragments of songs used in the rest of the play. The ballet is particularly effective in this play since it is used to simulate a dream, where movements would naturally be slow-motion and graceful and the semblance of "unreality" can be created. Anything is possible in a dream, but most of all a dream involves the sub-conscious mind of the dreamer. It is, therefore, possible to travel into Lorrey's mind, even while she is asleep, through the medium of ballet and Song.

In West Side Story, the dance involves another yet equally important aspect of the musical theatre. Through the use of the dance much actual violence is avoided in the play, thereby keeping the distance greater between the audience and the action. Dancing involves a physical as well as an emotional release and is, therefore, employed throughout

the action of the play. Even though dancing would seem to quieten tempers and muffle violence, the dance movements epitomize perfectly

. . . the tensions, brutality, bravado, and venomous hatred of the gang warriors . . . The few quiet interludes between dances are, by way of contrast, not a letdown in suspense but more an opportunity for the spectator to relax before becoming engaged in watching another vigorous ballet.¹⁶

The musical theatre incorporates many kinds of songs. Some of these are ballads, rhapsodic numbers, rhythm numbers, and the folk song. The ballad is a simple, romantic, descriptive song ("Tonight," West Side Story); the rhapsodic song combines light lyrics with delicate music ("Dites-moi," South Pacific); the rhythm number is carried along by an animated quality of musical beat ("My Mother's Weddin' Day," Brigadoon), and the folk song is reminiscent of the life of a people ("Matchmaker," Fiddler on the Roof). Each kind of song is employed together with its appropriate tempo and dynamics to form a creative whole involving the richness of expression, the lyric quality of poetry, and the theme and philosophy of the total play.

In summary, musical drama has utilized the six parts of dramatic form in its particular order of Song, Character, Plot, Thought, Diction, and Spectacle. Song, of course, is the most important, and it is through this medium that much of the weight of Character, Plot, Thought, and mood is carried. Through the use of Song, the musical theatre is able to accomplish almost anything dramatic and, thereby, can make complete use of the theatre.

¹⁶Abe Laufer, Broadway's Greatest Musicals (New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1970), p. 226.

CHAPTER III

GRAND FINALE: MY FAIR LADY

My Fair Lady has firmly established itself as one of the most artistic and successful productions in the American musical theatre. This play incorporates the working principles of musical drama better than any other one play of the genre.

Song, of course, is the play's most important element. The music is beautifully attuned to the atmosphere and background of London in 1912. It is through Song that the action unfolds, characters are developed, and the theme and philosophical elements of the play are transmitted. A need is felt in the audience, from the first indication of Higgins' intention, to see Eliza succeed in charming all of London and the stuffy Higgins himself.

Commentaries of the sort once voiced by the old Greek chorus are abundantly felt in this play, particularly in the song, "Little Bit of Luck," sung by Eliza's father. He is able, in the course of this one song, to impart the feelings of his social class in one stanza, his personal beliefs in another, and the philosophy of Henry Higgins in still another stanza. Doolittle's rendering of Higgins' philosophy is a discreet but necessary and ironic foreshadowing of the outcome of the play.

The gentle sex was made for man to marry
To share his nest and see his food is cooked.
The gentle sex was made for man to marry--but

With a little bit of luck,
 With a little bit of luck,
 You can have it all and not get hooked.¹

The servants in My Fair Lady also function in much the same manner as the Greek chorus, imparting truth, wisdom, and sometimes ironic comment. Choral irony is illustrated in the servants' song,

Poor Professor Higgins
 On he plods
 Against all odds,
 Oh, Poor Professor Higgins.

(MFL, p. 60)

The words would seem to indicate a sympathy for Professor Higgins that is really not felt. He spends hours and hours working with Eliza when it really isn't necessary except for his own satisfaction.

The overture of My Fair Lady is functional--the prologue to action which is made up of the various musical numbers in the production and sets the mood of lightness but not simplicity. It is melodious and contains a quality of refinement when the overture melts into the opening number. The opera has just ended and a well-dressed crowd emerges in search of taxis. Street entertainers enter and perform tricks and dance steps. Mrs. Eynsford-Hill and her son Freddy come through the crowd and one of the entertainers collides with him causing him to fall backwards and strike a huddled figure, knocking her flower basket out of her hands. She begins to complain in full, rich Cockney, "Aaaaoooooww!", and simultaneously encounters another taxi-seeker, Colonel Pickering,

¹Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, My Fair Lady, based on Pygmalion by Bernard Shaw (New York: New American Library, 1956), p. 29. All subsequent quotations from this source will be indicated by MFL and incorporated into the body of the text.

who gives her some change. A bystander calls Eliza's attention to a man standing by a pillar writing down everything she says. Eliza thinks he is a detective and wails her innocence of any wrong--"I ain't done nothin' wrong by speakin' to the gentleman: I've a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb" (MFL, p. 17). The man is actually Professor Higgins who is making phonetic notations of her speech.

Higgins then begins to sing the opening number, "Why Can't the English Teach their Children how to Speak?" This song simultaneously manages to establish Higgins' philosophy of the aesthetics of speech:

An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him
 The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him
 One common language I'm afraid we'll never get.
 Oh, why can't the English learn to set
 A good example to people whose English is painful to your ears?
 (MFL, p. 22)

his hostility toward sloppy speech:

Hear them down in Soho Square
 Dropping aitches everywhere,
 Speaking English any way they like . . .
 I'd rather hear a choir singing flat.
 Chickens cackling in a barn . . .
 (MFL, p. 22)

and his potential relation to Eliza as he points to her and sings to

Colonel Pickering:

I ask you sir, what sort of word is that?
 It's "Aooow" and "Garn" that keep her in her place . . .
 Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?
 If you spoke as she does, sir,
 Instead of the way you do,
 Why, you might be selling flowers, too.
 (MFL, p. 22)

What would otherwise be dialogue in most dramatic forms is developed through the use of Song into an important, witty, functional scene.

It is possible to express some things in the guise of Songs which would otherwise be incongruous in dialogue. In Act II, Scene ii, Freddy and Eliza meet outside Higgins' house. He is singing "On the Street Where you Live" when Eliza appears. They talk briefly, and then Freddy suddenly bursts into song.

Speak and the world is full of singing,
And I'm winging
Higher than the birds.

(MFL, p. 22)

Eliza responds with a song:

Words!
Words! Words! I'm so sick of words!
I get words all day through;
First from him, now from you!
Don't talk of stars
Burning alive;
If you're in love,
Show me!

(MFL, p. 102)

These lines are lyrical, imaginative, introspective, and poetic.

Because they are sung, they rise above literal mundane considerations; and the audience, therefore, feels no incongruity between conversation and song.

The characters in My Fair Lady are clearly defined, but since they are closely associated with Song, it is easy to trace character development through their musical numbers. Higgins' character is revealed in the beginning in that disdain he feels for his inferiors in "Why Can't the English Teach Their Children How to Speak?" His nature becomes even clearer in the ironic defense of his own way of life in "I'm an Ordinary Man." He makes clear here that his is the life of a bachelor and

. . . let a woman in your life
 And your serenity is through!
 . . . you are up against the wall!
 . . . you invite eternal strife.
 . . . patience hasn't got a chance.
 . . . And your sabbatical is through!
 I shall never let a woman in my life:
 (MFL, pp. 43-44)

Higgins' petulant admiration for masculine traits is emphatically pronounced in "A Hymn to Him."

Men are so honest, so thoroughly square
 Eternally noble, historically fair . . .
 Men are so friendly, good-natured and kind;
 A better companion you never will find . . .
 Why can't a woman be more like a man?
 (MFL, pp. 113-114)

It is not until Higgins' last song that he can finally admit to himself and everyone else that he has fallen in love with Eliza.

I've grown accustomed to her face!
 She almost makes the day begin . . .
 I was serenely independent and content before we met;
 Surely I could be that way again--
 and yet
 I've grown accustomed to her looks;
 Accustomed to her voice;
 Accustomed to her face.
 (MFL, p. 125)

Eliza's character and character change are shown also in her progression of songs. First as a poor, dirty, Cockney flower-girl, she dreams only of a life full of physical comforts with food, warmth, and love in "Wouldn't it be Loverly."

Lots of choc'late for me to eat;
 Lots of coal makin' lots of heat;
 Warm face, warm hands, warm feet . . . !
 Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?
 (MFL, p. 26)

Later, having gone through the rigors of the professor's speech classes, she expresses her secret defiance and in a blind rage sings:

Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait!
 You'll be sorry but your tears'll be too late!
 Will I help you? Don't be funny!
 Just you wait; 'enry 'iggins, just you wait!
 (MFL, p. 55)

When Eliza finally manages to speak her vowels correctly, exhilaration at having succeeded is conveyed in "The Rain in Spain Stays Mainly in the Plain." Her new feelings for Higgins are then revealed in "I Could Have Danced All Night."

I'll never know
 What made it so exciting,
 Why all at once
 My heart took flight.
 I only know when he
 Began to dance with me
 I could have danced, danced, danced all night!
 (MFL, p. 68)

Eliza's impatience with all men bursts through in "Show Me," as she sings to Freddy

Sing me no song!
 Read me no rhyme!
 Don't waste my time,
 Show me!
 (MFL, p. 102)

At the end of the play, in a bolt of sarcastic fury, Eliza tells her opinion of Higgins in "Without You." This song does not reflect her real opinion of him, but the fact that she now knows how to handle him. She is employing reverse psychology when she sings:

I shall not feel alone without you
 I can stand on my own without you.
 So go back in your shell,
 I can do bloody well
 Without . . .
 (MFL, p. 124)

Almost all the Song ideas are generated by the text of the play and are necessary for plot development. As part of her drill, Higgins has Eliza repeat "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain," and in "Hartford, Hereford, and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly happen." At the moment when the professor and the audience are beginning to doubt whether Eliza will ever get them right, she suddenly pronounces the words correctly. The startled professor asks her to repeat the lines. and this time she begins to sing them. "The disjointed sentences blend into a unified musical number that ends with Eliza, Professor Higgins, and Colonel Pickering all dancing in jubilation."² How much more effective it is for Eliza and Higgins to dance all over the living room and sing "The Rain in Spain stays Mainly in the Plain," than merely to utter the words. This is perhaps the most musically and dramatically effective episode. The audience listens--astonished--because it is hard to believe that Eliza has actually made it. Suddenly her delight becomes that of the audience.

The plot of My Fair Lady is based on the well-tested formula of the Pygmalion legend and is similar to the Cinderella story where a drab young girl is transformed into a glorious "member" of the aristocracy, if only for a short while. The fact that My Fair Lady was based on this story (Pygmalion by Bernard Shaw) is probably one reason for its great success. Eliza Doolittle is a poor, dirty Cockney flower-girl with an atrocious accent and the ultimately elegant Eliza manages to charm Higgins, London society, and the audience as well.

²Laufe, p. 201.

The diction of the play is carried in part by spoken dialogue and in part by song. All diction, whether spoken or sung, retains the verbal simplicity essential to making the lyric or dialogue appear natural to the character who sings or speaks it, and creates freshness through an unstereotyped idea of character. Melodic and harmonic warmth are combined with rhythmic simplicity and a feeling of emotional and musical inevitability, as when the servants begin the chant:

Ay not I,
O, not Ow,
Pounding, pounding in our brain.
Ay not I,
O, not Ow,
Don't say "Rine," say "Rain."

(MFL, p. 62)

The meaning of the end of My Fair Lady is carried through song. The audience would think that Higgins' last line, "Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?" (MFL, p. 128) is an indication that he cared no more for her than he would a "dirty, Cockney flower-girl." However, the words of his last song reveal Higgins' inner thoughts--those he is as yet unable to convey openly to Eliza.

I've grown accustomed to her face!
She almost makes the day begin . . .
Her smiles, Her frowns.
Her ups, Her downs,
Are second nature to me now . . .

(MFL, p. 126)

From merely reading the notes and stage directions, the ending could take on the same meaning as it would if "I've Grown Accustomed to her Face" were not sung. The last notes read: "There are tears in Eliza's eyes. She understands!" (MFL, p. 128). From reading only, it would be possible to believe that Higgins cared nothing at all for Eliza except as a manifestation of his ego, but because of the shades of

meaning that can be reproduced and translated by gestures, tone-of-voice, and expression on the part of the actors, as well as the translation of verse into song, the ending is obvious when staged.

My Fair Lady is able to bring to the stage the best use of all the working principles of musical drama. Song is used as soliloquy ("Just You Wait, 'enry 'iggins"), imparts philosophical comment ("Little Bit of Luck"), serves to establish mood and theme ("Why Can't the English Teach Their Children How to Speak?"), reveals the character development of Eliza and Higgins, enhances plot development, and combines rhythm and melody to create a unified and coherent whole--one that comes close to perfection on the musical stage.

CHAPTER IV

CODA

This study has not attempted to be exhaustive in the field of musical drama, but rather to give some insights into exactly what it is that constitutes the essence and working principles of the form. Almost everyone has been able, at the end of a musical drama, to say, "That was good; I enjoyed it." It is more difficult to continue, however, and say why it was good or what it was that made it enjoyable. It is only from a study of several plays in the musical theatre that enlightenment comes and the form may be viewed as a whole.

All musical drama is not of first quality. There has been some abuse of the form and lightweight entertainment has occurred because of the abuse, particularly abuses in the excessive use of farce and melodrama.

The traditional association of poetry and drama continued for almost two thousand years. Poetry contains life and spirit and can sometimes express a kind of truth that can not be expressed in prose. Musical drama, alone among modern dramatic forms, offers a significant substitute for the poetic dialogue found in traditional drama. Its music and lyrics may vary in quality, but the potential for the truth of poetry is there in the emotional power of Song.

As has been shown, there are basic elements in the musical theatre which apply to all musical dramas, but it is because of the primary position which Song holds that the form is able to accomplish what it does. It is good entertainment, good theatre, and good art.

Because of the arrangement and structure of the form, it is possible to create musical tragedy, musical comedy, and musical tragicomedy. The possibilities for story lines, characterizations, and musical creations are endless.

There are many areas of study left open in the field of musical drama, including the relationship of music and poetry, the relationship of lyrics and poetry, characteristics of comedy, tragedy, and modern tragicomedy which may apply to musical drama, and the potential of the form as related to new and changing productions. Although contemporary musical drama comes in every degree and kind, the best of modern musical drama can be as serious as any non-musical drama. Therefore, the genre has reached its potential for carrying serious thematic statement. The area of musical drama remains wide open for further investigation and study and is deserving of the efforts of serious scholars.

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