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Overture: Musical Traditions before Cinema

Although the film musical celebrates a sense of liberation, the genre is itself beholden to a long heritage of music composition and performance. Thus, to start a history of the musical film with the making of *The Jazz Singer* (1927)—or even the earliest sound experiments—would be incomplete. Many writers on the film genre have examined the influence of live American theatrical entertainment.¹ Like those works, this opening chapter will survey the stage traditions that shaped what would be done on celluloid. Yet, the film musical's history requires more than acquaintance with musical theatre's history; it also necessitates some basic awareness of the history of American music at large, going back to before the United States had formed as an independent nation.

The musical film would inherit centuries of material and mindsets, laying out a number of well-established aesthetic as well as industrial and social patterns. In addition to showing how much the past would bear upon what the musical film would or could do, the history of American music is itself rife with examples of battles between freedom and control, oscillating between music as an example of individual expression and music as a type of communal bond. Various religious and political forces attempted to stifle certain forms of music and/or dance, usually over their perceived ability to liberate sexual desires. As a nation of multiple communities, various cultures mingled and sometimes clashed over each other's musical tastes. Achieving individual freedom of musical expression often came at the expense of others, most obviously in regard to racial or ethnic minority groups. As an industry formed around music, composers, performers, and publishers often struggled with each other over who was in control of the music. The musical film would not only take on many of the idioms established from earlier eras, it would also inherit these cultural negotiations and battles. Central to these interactions is the quest to define a national identity—what exactly did it mean to “be an American,” and how did its music reflect this new nationality? Primary to an emergent American identity was the importance of individual liberty—but how could people come together as a national community by championing one's independence?

Music and Dance in Early America

Rhythm, melody, and movement have been intimately tied to a sense of community and shared outlook on the world since the first instances of human civilization, and thus it is no surprise that they figured strongly within North America long before the United States declared its independence from Great Britain. Song and dance were fundamental elements to the wide variety of indigenous cultures. As with numerous other groups, music holds special importance in Native American rituals and ceremonies, vital practices that bind individuals together. Since most of these cultures relied almost exclusively on oral communication, song was also used to maintain historical memory, as well as to share tribal myths and legends. The importance of the oral tradition has remained through the centuries—and, if anything, increased as various communities were threatened (and many extinguished) with the advent of the white man. Along with the spoken word, song became a vital method literally to keep culture alive. Thus, there has grown enormous responsibility to preserve these songs and stories.

The absence of written evidence obviously requires a lot of conjecture in analyzing native cultures prior to contact with European explorers and settlers. Yet, studies tend to agree on certain patterns.² For example, certain figures within communities took on special roles as the keepers of the stories and of the songs. While there was pressure from within the groups to remember and repeat the tales and the structure of the songs, it was inevitable that singers and storytellers would (either intentionally or not) vary the words, the organization, and the melodies across time, and from generation to generation. Without written notation, music was thus controlled primarily by the singer. Most surviving instances of native North American music also strongly emphasize rhythm rather than melody, which allows the singer greater freedom to vary the notes from performance to performance. Lastly, when used in ceremonies or rituals, such music often went on for hours. The emphasis on rhythm over melody was tied to such uses—but also led to long and repetitive pieces. Such repetition could etch melodic patterns into community memory, but could also allow for variation as the repetitions continued.

When Europeans began settling on the east coast of North America, many regarded native tribes as primitive and animalistic, and branded their music as “heathen.” Influenced by the Reformation, many early settlers attempted to forsake “sins of the flesh”—and thus as a rule regarded secular music as morally corrupt. Sacred music, on the other hand, was considered a unique method of speaking to God—and in this way, hymns paralleled music used in native rituals that helped individuals feel their interconnectedness to the rest of their community and to all of nature. Illiteracy was still incredibly common, particularly among those not of noble birth or part of the emerging bourgeoisie. Thus, as with the oral tradition in native cultures, most hymns were

learned by ear. These early settlers either failed to recognize or purposefully ignored the similarities between native use of music and their own investment in music.³

Religious communities were not the only ones arriving on North American shores from Europe, and those settlers brought with them varied traditions of music making and dance from their homelands. The sense of rhythm, harmony, and melody structure differed from that in Native American cultures, and a history of “serious” music had also instituted a method of written notation to ensure a composition would remain the same each time it was performed. The rise of notated “classical” music increased the authority (and reputation) of the composer over the musician or vocalist, giving rise to renowned figures such as Bach, Handel, and Mozart.⁴ Such attitudes would cross the Atlantic as musicians performed these works, or as composers used the same methods in creating their own works. Even churches started printing up collections of hymns for use at services. Further, the development of written notation—sheet music—would create a method to sell music, forming what would eventually become a major entertainment industry by the start of the twentieth century. Yet, the oral tradition still existed. In contrast to classical music, often commissioned and performed for nobility, folk songs among the working-class or peasant communities were shared at gatherings or at taverns, and still privileged the singer over the songwriter (so much so that the authors of these tunes are largely unknown).⁵

Another important source of musical heritage came with the arrival of Africans to the continent, most of them as slaves. The music of the African nations held much in common with that of Native American communities: rhythm-based and passed from generation to generation orally rather than in written form. Of course, captured and taken against their will, Africans transplanted to American shores were able to bring precious little but themselves and what they were able to hold in their memories. Hence, the oral tradition was practically the only option available to them in maintaining a connection to their heritage. Responding to the situation, slaves of African descendency learned how to use music not only to hold onto their sense of self but also to survive in a hostile environment. The form of “call and response,” in which a song acts as a dialogue between people, became a key method for slaves to bond with each other *and* to communicate with each other in ways their white European owners did not recognize. Call and response then was used as a method of resistance, including at times helping organize means of escape. Also, while creating a cultural bond, call and response emphasizes the talent and creativity of the individual performer involved, that each particular instance is unique and will never be sung in the exact same fashion again. It must be noted that singing among the slaves had its benefits for slave owners too. Not only did such singing provide entertainment for them, it also let owners know where slaves were even when they were out of sight.⁶

As the settlements became colonies and then states, these various forms of music encountered and interacted with each other, creating a variety of blends and influences. European styles of music dominated, since white Europeans and their progeny sat at the top of the power structure within the United States. Yet, the various cultures (and the people themselves) were bound to intermingle, no matter how hard some may have attempted to keep them separate. The Louisiana port of New Orleans serves as an apt example.⁷ The mixing of European, African, and Native American blood resulted in a new identity termed Creole (although attempts to distinguish a racial hierarchy within that term still happened). Growing into a major city, New Orleans also began developing a vibrant and unique type of music, drawing from a variety of sources: French opera (since it began as a French settlement), other European popular songs courtesy of traveling sailors, plus Native American music and slave music. This type of *mélange* would result in styles of music unique to the United States.

Dance evolved along similar patterns. If music was potentially devil's work for religious settlers, dance definitely was too sensual and of the flesh. Hence, dancing was routinely forbidden, and one of the ways Native Americans were demonized as sinful heathens by these Christian fundamentalists was the way natives danced for hours in tribal gatherings. While European settlers tended to regard Native American dancing with curiosity and reprobation, their form of dance functioned largely the same way as did their music, as a way of maintaining and passing on ritual beliefs, myths, and history. Dance was as much a form of communication as music and, as such, did contain at least a basic structure (even if it was incomprehensible to the white explorers who witnessed it).

Of course, not all Europeans shunned dancing, and as others came to America they brought not only their music but also their styles of dance. Just as serious European music was put down on paper in order to maintain control over any performance of it, respectable social dance in Europe was highly structured, with specific steps to learn and repeat: gavottes, rounds, and so forth. Such structure helped a roomful of people dance fluidly as a group, but also helped quell the potential liberating qualities of dance that churchgoers feared. Such free joyous exhilaration could be found in many of the folk dances popular across Europe, used in village celebrations or at the local tavern. Jigs, clog dances, and the like brought people together as much as did the strict rules of a cotillion, but with less structure and more energy.⁸

Slaves from Africa attempted to preserve the style and meaning of dance in their home cultures, but often faced resistance from their masters for doing so. While owners found value in the performance of call and response among slaves, native African dancing seemed too akin to the way Native Americans danced, which was regarded as sinful, anarchic, and potentially violent. Choreographer Leni Sloan, in the documentary *Ethnic Notions* (1986), describes how African American slaves reacted to a prohibition on dancing by

shuffling their feet in a manner that cunningly skirted the law's definition of dance. White viewers found amusement in such movements, seeing this shuffling as evidence of the primitive nature of people of African descent. Eventually white performers began to copy and exaggerate those movements, creating perhaps the first national dance craze, "Jump Jim Crow," in the late 1820s.⁹ Thus, just as with the music, the intersection of the various forms was beginning to create a style of dance unique to the new nation, and one developed out of the power dynamic between freedom and control.

The Development of American Theatre

Various forms of presentation of song and dance to an audience had also developed in various cultures, going back at least to the days of ancient Greek theatre, with the inclusion of a chorus that commented in musical chant on the characters and action. The state of European theatre held sway over the United States as it gained independence, from high-class concerts and operas to the more bawdy entertainments aimed at the groundlings. Opera focused on epic narratives, structured around "arias" (the more lyrical melodic set pieces for the main singers) and "recitative" (sung portions that were not as memorable melodically, often involving dialogue between characters). Theatres for opera and other "legitimate" productions could be found in most major cities across the States, but more common were troupes of performers who traveled from community to community across the vast expanse of states and territories. Such companies would set up a tent or outdoor venue and put on a production for a few days before heading elsewhere.¹⁰ The level of talent and even the type of entertainment varied wildly, and customers often could get both a Shakespearean soliloquy and a rousing off-color sing-along in the same show. Striving for cultural legitimacy, American actors, musicians, and writers followed the example of Europe—but many also strove to carve out a uniquely American style of theatre, as the entire country grappled with defining exactly what "being American" meant.

Arguably, the first particularly American form of theatrical musical entertainment came to prominence by the 1840s: minstrelsy.¹¹ The term derived from medieval Europe, referring to those who sang as a profession, either for the amusement of nobility or for other groups as they wandered from village to village. American minstrel shows likewise traveled from place to place, with the explicit idea of the lowly hoping to entertain their betters, for minstrel shows presented white performers doing a version of black song and dance for the delight of white customers (Figure 1.1). The popularity of white performers made up to look like black slaves singing and dancing "Jump Jim Crow" led to an entire form of theatrical entertainment. Little to no attempt was done to provide authentic representation of black culture in minstrel shows, though.



Figure 1.1 An advertisement for a minstrel show (ca. 1840), arguably the first particularly American form of theatrical musical entertainment, with white performers in blackface singing “Ethiopian melodies” or “coon songs.” Snapshot taken from: *Ethnic Notions* (1986).

Rather, black people were impersonated as grotesque buffoons for the amusement of white audiences. The makeup style, known as blackface, was one of clownish exaggeration—as were the typical mannerisms and dialect employed by the performers. Stephen Foster and other composers developed an entire genre called “coon songs,” versions of what Anglo Americans thought African Americans sang, and such songs gained popularity beyond the minstrel shows. By the 1840s, such entertainment was popular all over the country, not just the slave-holding states, and minstrel troupes traveled westward to all of the new territories being formed.

Such music was often accompanied by dance, again with white performers in blackface doing versions of what they saw being done within black communities. African Americans took the rhythmic possibilities in European clog dancing and slowly evolved it into a new form, creating more complex rhythms than before and employing more full body dexterity (traditional clog dancing tends to emphasize the feet stomping, with the upper body remaining rigid). Imitations of this new type of dance were often included in minstrel shows. Eventually, towards the end of the century, shoes replaced clogs with lighter-weight metal taps on the soles, making a cleaner sound with less effort. Tap dancing, by African Americans and others, would become one of the top forms of musical dance performance in the United States by the end of the century, long after minstrel shows had lost their audience.¹²

The format of minstrel shows exhibits a balance between control and freedom. For example, the songs, dances, and jokes were not tethered to an overarching story, but an organizational framework *did* exist. Each production began with a semicircle of male performers in rows (depending on how large the company was), all in blackface except for the man in the center, the interlocutor, who oversaw and introduced the various songs and dances done by the rest. The most prominent blackface performers were seated at either end of the stage, referred to as Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones (after the instruments they played). Jokes arose when the interlocutor would converse with either of these two. The next act moved into various skits (called “olio”), usually farcical views of Southern plantation life, often ending with a parody (or “burlesque”) of a popular play, opera, or other cultural event.

The inherent racism of minstrelsy cannot be denied, presenting incredibly stereotypical, ignorant blacks trying to act hifalutin’, but still under the supervision of a white leader. The prevalence of sexual humor also reinforced common white opinion that black people were oversexualized and uncivilized, closer to animals than human beings. Further, minstrelsy also supported a notion that African Americans are naturally musical. Yet, the widespread popularity of minstrelsy also indicates the amount of fascination black culture exerted over white America. Also, one of the sources of humor in minstrel shows came from the blackface performers breaking cultural taboos or making fun of societal norms. White performers thus were able to use blackface to break free from the restrictions of what could be said or done in regular life, and white audiences could take delight in seeing someone break those rules as well. Thus, while maintaining an expected structure of performance and exerting cultural dominance over the African American community, a large aspect of the popularity of minstrel shows was their carnivalesque nature: debunking those in power, upending social propriety, and offering comedic anarchy—if only for a few hours.¹³

A sizeable percentage of minstrel performers were Irish and then Jewish immigrants who felt ostracized from WASP society. Cultural historians have described how these artists used blackface in strategic ways.¹⁴ Firstly, donning blackface helped them argue for acceptance into white American society by demonstrating their need to “darken up” to play African American characters. At the same time, though, these ethnic groups had their own experiences with prejudice and oppression, and blackface minstrelsy gave them an outlet to express their frustrations and to rebel against the establishment in a sanctioned manner. The burlesques of high culture that occurred in the final act (such as Shakespeare or an Italian opera) lambasted the pretensions of the elite, and the lack of any narrative in the opening semicircle promoted an atmosphere of chaotic hilarity that the white interlocutor could barely contain.¹⁵ The carnivalesque environment also encompassed issues of sexuality and gender, for these all-male troupes regularly did lowbrow female impersonations as well

(also in blackface). Just as minstrel shows could employ racist caricature to challenge the powers that be, men in drag often portrayed women in incredibly sexist and misogynist ways but also made fun of and complicated gender roles and sexual desires to the delight of the audience.

Minstrel shows continued to tour throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, but lost dominance in the wake of the Civil War and the post-slavery Restoration Era. By the late 1800s, the olio structure featured within minstrelsy had become its own type of theatrical entertainment, and was eventually rechristened as “vaudeville” (“music hall” in Britain, or “variety” in the rest of Europe). Vaudeville consisted of a series of unrelated acts presented on one bill. Singers or dancers in blackface did continue to take the stage in vaudeville, but that was only one of many forms of entertainment to be found. Vaudeville emphasized its diversity, presenting comedians, singers, dancers, dog acts, jugglers, magicians, performing seals, contortionists, and more. Performers would travel all over the country from theatre to theatre, doing two or three shows a day, with the bill changing every week. As with minstrel shows, vaudeville’s emphasis on spectacle and a wide range of entertainment seemed to have a liberating sense of randomness, but some form of structure did exist. Similar types of performers were not placed next to each other (so a singer was not followed by another singer), in order to accentuate the variety of talent. Also, the first on the bill was usually the lowest rung (the least popular performer), and the last was the star headliner. Lastly, because vaudeville theatres aimed at middle-class customers (offering hours of entertainment at a lower cost than serious theatre, opera, or ballet), theatre owners made certain not to hire acts that engaged in the more crude sexual humor that ran rampant during the heyday of minstrelsy.¹⁶

The burlesque portion of minstrelsy also became popular as its own form (and without the blackface) at end of the 1800s. Burlesque theatres initially emphasized the presentation of parodies of popular high-class entertainment or of important historical events. In tearing down the importance of these historical or cultural institutions, these burlesques often relied on sexual puns and other risqué humor, thus holding onto the ribaldry that vaudeville consciously eschewed. While minstrel shows were traditionally all male, stand-alone burlesque began including female performers rather than actors in drag. Thus, actual women became involved in the verbal and physical forms of sexual humor in burlesque. Eventually, the sexual nature of burlesque became the main attraction, with the parodies gradually replaced by comics doing brief routines or skits with a troupe of female performers who then dominated the rest of the program with their striptease routines, baring as much as they could without getting arrested (and sometimes failing in that effort).¹⁷

As the twentieth century began, burlesque was largely considered trash and on the margins of American culture. While the dominant reason for this attitude was the emphasis on sexual titillation, burlesque was also demeaned

because it had become one of the last vestiges of what had once been a prevalent form of engagement between the performers and the audience. For centuries, in Europe long before the United States became an independent nation, theatregoing was a participatory activity. Attendees not only laughed at or cried to whatever was being performed, they also regularly voiced their reactions openly, and interacted with those on stage both negatively (heckling, booing, or throwing things) or positively (demanding an encore of a well-performed speech or song). Conversations between those on stage and audience members during a performance were also common. This type of behavior was just as common at the opera or a performance of Shakespeare as it was at a minstrel show. In the late 1800s, though, attempts grew to bring the audience under control, instructing them to remain quiet, polite, and attentive to the artists on stage. The lower the aesthetic regard, the more rowdy the audience was allowed to be. Thus, since vaudeville was lower than legitimate theatre, it still had its share of hecklers, as well as the opportunity for audience sing-alongs. Burlesque, as the lowest rung, had strippers and cheap comics continuously interacting with its customers.¹⁸

The burlesque queen was considered to be little more than a prostitute by mainstream society, an attitude that carried across to women in the theatrical profession by and large during the 1800s and early 1900s. Burlesque, vaudeville, and the emerging form of musical theatre regularly employed lines of “chorus girls”—skimpily clad dancers, specifically on stage to be on display, without any character names or lines of dialogue. Nonetheless, the sheer existence of women on stage challenged previous cultural gender norms, offering female customers a vision of a life outside the home.¹⁹ By the late 1800s, all forms of theatre had become a space for women to carve out careers. As such, actresses, singers, and dancers could potentially gain a level of financial independence and security unavailable to most other women in the United States at the time. Some women gained such popularity that they were able to run their own theatrical companies, such as Eleanora Duse and Laura Keane.²⁰ Ironically, the roles for these powerful women were often limited to characters that upheld the value of marriage and motherhood—and characters that attempted to break free of such strictures inevitably suffered the consequences of such actions.

Women performing in legitimate theatre were more sheltered from scorn because of the association with “high art” and the continued influence of Europe, including its music. Divas such as Jenny Lind sang with a polished, trained voice that connoted respectability. While star performers mattered greatly within opera or ballet, the composers held prominence as well—unlike the composers of music for minstrel shows, vaudeville, and burlesque. In those forms, songs were taken from a variety of writers rather than one artist, and the performer was what drew audiences. Operas, on the other hand, relied on a central composer to shape a stylistically coherent, sung-through narrative. In the 1800s, a new style, dubbed “light opera” or “*opera bouffe*,” emerged in

Europe, eventually evolving into a form with the name “operetta.” Such theatre employed trained voices and the lush soaring melodies found in operatic arias, but contained dialogue between such songs (replacing the recitative used in conventional opera) and tended to tell more escapist storylines. The work done by Jacques Offenbach in France and Franz Lehar in Austria also brought dance more centrally into the story than traditional opera tended to do.²¹ Perhaps even more influential were the operettas written by the British team of Gilbert and Sullivan. Their light operas regularly satirize modern society, and contain not only typical operatic melodies, but also “patter songs” that are more rhythmic than melodic, in order to splay out various jokes in rapid fire, such as “I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General” from their 1879 production, *The Pirates of Penzance*. The dry humor of their librettos and the inclusion of patter songs began to turn operetta further away from traditional opera and into a potentially new form of musical entertainment. Many of these works were brought over from Europe and performed in the States.²²

Where light opera turns into what we now call musical theatre is in the eye of the beholder. Many have retroactively listed *The Black Crook* as the first American musical, which premiered in New York in 1866, and toured extensively across the country through the 1870s.²³ Although theatre historians cannot definitively verify the particulars, supposedly a ballet troupe from Paris was left stranded during an American tour when the theatre where they were hired to perform burned to the ground. A theatre company agreed to wedge them into the melodramatic spectacular they were about to premiere, turning the production into something less than a light opera, but definitely more narrative-based than a minstrel show or vaudeville. Others soon attempted to copy its success, but an official recognition of a new type of entertainment called “musical theatre” would still be decades away.

Imported European operettas continued to dominate through the end of the century, leading a number of American composers to try their own hand at it. Victor Herbert began to rival his European contemporaries in popularity, writing the scores for operettas such as *Babes in Toyland* (first produced in 1903), *Naughty Marietta* (1910), and *Sweethearts* (1913). Other American composers writing for the theatre started working in a less operatic vein, bringing something of the style of music found in vaudeville and trying to input it into the narrative structure traditional to opera and operetta. Writing at the same time as Herbert was George M. Cohan, who had begun his career in vaudeville. The songs Cohan composed were jauntier than those found in operetta, and more easily sung by the average person. He also became well known for writing explicitly patriotic tunes, such as “The Yankee Doodle Boy” and “It’s a Grand Old Flag,” as if announcing that a uniquely American songwriter was breaking away from European influence.²⁴ As the 1900s began, a new sound was emerging within American culture, and its rise would be employed to create a unique form of American musical theatre as well.

The Rise of “American” Music

Just as the confluence of various racial, ethnic, and class-identified cultures began to merge into various unique forms of theatrical entertainment, so too did their interaction help a new music establish itself across the United States. Towards the end of the 1800s, march music (mostly remembered today through the work of composer John Phillip Sousa) was absorbed and transformed by African American musicians in St. Louis and other cities into what was soon referred to as “ragtime.” Ragtime’s emphasis on syncopated melody sat atop and energized the strong bass beat found in marches, and quickly caught fire across the country. Its evocation of vitality and confidence seemed to speak for an American sense of boisterous potential in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Whole new worlds were opening up due to new inventions, and ragtime’s brash and jaunty sound matched the feel of life moving at a faster pace.²⁵

Dances were introduced to accompany the new sound: the cakewalk, the turkey trot, the Texas Tommy, and the bunny hug. Such dances did not involve complicated choreography, but did require being able to move to a different rhythm than the conventional European ballroom dances, having originated within either African American neighborhoods or working-class dance halls. They also involved dance partners holding each other, which shocked and outraged some citizens as much as the waltz had done when it was introduced to polite society across Europe in the mid-1700s.²⁶

Although the foundations of ragtime are primarily from African American culture, the musical heritage of Eastern and Southern Europe (especially from Russian and German Jews) also influenced its sound. Such an amalgamation was possible because of the influx of immigrants from such parts of Europe into the working-class neighborhoods of such US urban centers as New York City, Chicago, and St. Louis. At the same time, African Americans swept up to these same cities in a “Great Migration” out of the formerly slave-holding South, in hopes of finding more economic opportunities and less discrimination. Each of these communities brought their musical heritage with them, making it possible literally to walk across the city streets and soak up a diversity of sounds.

If the movement of communities made it possible for different music traditions to find and blend into each other, it was the Industrial Revolution’s transformation of music into a mass media industry that made it possible for this new music to be heard and recognized from coast to coast. In the 1700s and early 1800s, musical tastes were largely local or regional, and it took time for a new song or other piece of music or dance to reach beyond its area of origin. Touring minstrel shows, vaudeville performers, and other theatrical troupes were a major method of sharing music across the United States. Although sheet music had existed for centuries, few saw much profit potential in printed

music until the second half of the 1800s. Audiences began to clamor for the latest popular tunes they had heard on stage, so that they could sing or play them at home. Soon, a host of companies specializing in mass-printing music had established themselves, mainly centered in one section of New York City that people referred to as “Tin Pan Alley,” in reference to the cacophony of banged-on pianos pouring out of brownstone windows.²⁷

Mass printing of music sold at low cost to the average citizen meant not just making songs available but mass producing new ones on a factory-like basis. It is no wonder Tin Pan Alley became famous for the plethora of tunes all being pounded out simultaneously. One study asserts that more popular music was churned out during the first decade of the 1900s than had *ever* been written before then, an average of about 25,000 songs per year.²⁸ When a particular tune caught the public’s fancy, the results were staggering. To provide one particular example, the ballad “After the Ball,” published in 1893, swept the country and eventually sold ten million copies over the next decade.²⁹ On the other side, such volume of songwriting meant a lot fell to the wayside, largely due to the sameness of the material. Publishing houses often focused on following trends, pressing songwriters to follow the patterns of other current popular tunes. “After the Ball,” for example, was part of a trend towards “waltz songs” that dominated the era before ragtime.³⁰ Customers seemed to like songs that stood out from the crowd but were not *too* different from what they were used to hearing—unique but familiar.

The publication of sheet music became the primary method of earning a living as a composer, and remained that way largely until the middle of the twentieth century. Ideally, the publisher would give a portion of the proceeds from the sale of sheet music to the songwriter—but such was not often the case. Copyright protection for music was woefully inadequate during the 1800s. The aforementioned Stephen Foster became destitute although his songs were popular across the country because so many companies published his music and many professional entertainers used his works without his consent and without giving him compensation.³¹ Although the federal government passed a new Copyright Act in 1909 that more explicitly defined copyrighted material (as opposed to music in the “public domain”), there was little enforcement in the first few years. Thus, members of the music industry took it upon themselves to create a form of protection. ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) was created in 1914 to ensure collection of license fees from people using work and distributing them to composers/lyricists as royalties. Victor Herbert was one of the founders, and most of those working in Tin Pan Alley quickly joined.

The sale of sheet music monetized the sharing of music from person to person, from community to community. To a certain extent, power was given to the publisher and (at least in intent) to the composer and lyricist, imposing upon the person who bought the sheet music to play or sing it in exactly the

fashion presented on paper. Nonetheless, once someone bought the sheet music, there was nothing to keep individuals from playing or singing the song in their own fashion. The popularity of such individuation was soon evident as ragtime evolved into jazz, which consciously stresses the importance of improvisation.³² Instrumentalists follow the basic chord structure of a song but extemporize on the “official” melodic line, including sliding into flatted (or “blue”) notes. Performers often take turns riffing, performing a type of call and response among the instruments, before combining for one final reworked version of the chorus. Vocalists were added to this mix, not only contributing their own melodic spin but also abandoning the original lyrics in favor of “scat-singing” meaningless sounds (“scoot-iddly-waa” or “heidy-heidy-heidy-ho”). Sheet music publishers responded by trying to notate ragtime or jazz arrangements of songs—that is, writing down the riffs and setting in place the blue notes, thus removing anything improvisational about it.

A number of technological inventions provided more effective methods of enshrining one particular way of performing a particular piece of music during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The phonograph (and subsequent equipment devised to record music) literally carves a performance onto a tangible object so that it can be replayed and reheard in *the exact same way* over and over again. Phonograph records helped spread music farther faster. One did not need to be in New York City or New Orleans to hear a particular singer or band anymore. Audiences would also be able to hear the same performance even after the artist had passed away. While having obvious benefit, some worried that the growth of recorded music in the average home would limit amateur music making, with people no longer singing or playing for themselves.³³ While such was not fully the case, the prevalence of recorded music may have narrowed people’s perception of *how* to perform music—much as sheet music attempts to authorize a “correct” way to “do” a song, people increasingly feel the need to sing or play *like* a certain performer heard on record. The ability to ship recorded music everywhere, though, meant more ability to introduce people to different types of music and to foster the type of cross-fertilization that resulted in ragtime and jazz.

The development of radio after World War I took things to a farther level of national exposure and capitalization. Most homes had radios in them by the end of the 1920s, and major national networks had formed to provide programming to listeners. A large emphasis in such programming was music—and with coast-to-coast hookups, technically the entire country could listen to the same performance *at the same time*. With radio and phonograph records making music so easily available, they helped spread jazz music quickly—to the point where many people refer to this period *as* “the Jazz Age.” Just as ragtime matched shifts in post-Civil War society, jazz’s speedy tempo and wild, unexpected turns in rhythm or melodic line seemed to tap into the sensibilities of the post-World War I era. In achieving victory in World War I, the United States took on a new

role as global power, and jazz seemed to express that optimism. The tempo of jazz also reflected the continued modernization and urbanization of American life.³⁴ Yet, at the same time, the jangly nature of jazz also may have spoken to a simmering sense of trauma that many felt coming out of their experiences during World War I, where the advances of the Industrial Revolution were used to more efficiently and quickly harm or kill people.

Just as ragtime evolved into jazz, even more lively steps, such as the Black Bottom and the Charleston, replaced the popular dances of the first part of the twentieth century. The American public seemed to take to them because they felt wild, uninhibited, and liberating (and their detractors decried them for the exact same reasons). The connotations of the names given to both of these dance crazes, as well as the widespread popularity of jazz itself, indicate the continued importance of African American culture and white society's ongoing fascination with it. The result of such ongoing blending and reworking did something without anyone realizing it fully: the creation of a uniquely "American" music that brought millions together in its celebration of individual liberation.

American Musical Theatre

In the early 1900s, a number of big theatres were constructed near Times Square in New York City, many of them along Broadway.³⁵ Some housed vaudeville, but most were for dramas, comedies, and for plays with music. By the 1920s, Broadway was established as the theatrical center of the United States, and it was there that a unique genre known as "the musical" began to coalesce. Yet, again, exactly what constituted a musical was hard to determine because it could be argued that a number of Broadway productions of this time were just versions of earlier types of musical entertainment. For example, light opera continued in the States under the title of "operetta." While European operettas still crossed over to the United States, homegrown versions ably competed with them. The American versions used operetta to create an archly romantic fantasyland, taking place in an exotic, almost fairytale environment. In such places, it seemed allowable that characters would be so overcome with emotion that they would suddenly erupt into full-throated songs of love, sorrow, or joy. American operetta also made certain to include various comedic supporting roles, characters who sometimes poked fun at all of the fantasy and romantic passion. They also regularly got their own comic numbers, songs that sounded less like opera and more like Tin Pan Alley.³⁶

The ongoing popularity of vaudeville led to a number of highly produced upscale productions on Broadway that were referred to as "revues." Revues were marketed as having nothing but "headliners" in their lists of acts, and with more money poured into the sets and costumes than was possible within



Figure 1.2 Florenz Ziegfeld, Broadway producer extraordinaire. Famous for his *Follies* revues, he also produced landmark “book shows” such as *Show Boat*, which premiered in 1927. Snapshot taken from: Author’s personal collection.

typical vaudeville. The revue format was made popular by producer Florenz Ziegfeld, who aimed to put on a new revue every year (Figure 1.2). Ziegfeld not only collated the biggest stars, but also became famous for presenting a bevy of gorgeous chorus girls. Each production would include at least one or two numbers that allowed the chorus girls to appear in elaborate costumes that nonetheless seemed to show lots of skin. These numbers were called “tableaux” because the chorus girls did not exactly dance. Rather, they largely stood there to be admired by the audience.³⁷ Eventually, some form of motion was added by having them slowly prance across the stage or down a staircase. The success of the *Ziegfeld Follies* quickly led to other revues by other producers, such as *George White’s Scandals* and *Earl Carroll’s Vanities*. As with vaudeville, revues contained a variety of types of music and dance and comedy, and without a connecting storyline. Yet, certain revues would have a certain organizational through-line, largely in having a centralized theme or visual design, neither of which happened in vaudeville at all.³⁸

Gradually the seed of what occurred in the creation of *The Black Crook* had taken root and blossomed into a type of theatrical entertainment that (like vaudeville or revues) used the American popular music style common to Tin Pan Alley, but within a storyline (like operetta). Some used the term “book musical” to distinguish this type of entertainment, because the songs and dances were situated within a “book” or script. Yet, most people called these shows “musical comedies” because, unlike operetta, there is greater emphasis on farce and shtick than on the high romantic dramatics typical of operetta. Furthermore, while a plot exists, most book musicals of the 1920s have just the flimsiest of plotlines. Usually, they contain a simple boy-meets-girl story filled

with silly complications that are eventually easily resolved after a lot of dithering, extraneous comedy, and various numbers. Characters break into song, but usually on the slightest whim and with little to do with the plot or the characters, unlike operetta, where songs are used to reveal character or carry through major plot points. Chorus girls or boys appear out of nowhere and romp around energetically. A supporting character mentions some oddball topic like peanut butter, goes into a whole song about it, and then returns to whatever was happening in the story before the interruption. For example, in *No, No, Nanette* (which debuted on Broadway in 1925, and became one of the most popular shows of the decade), characters seem to change their motivations randomly in order to fit the needs of the song they are about to perform. One second the title character is swooning about settling down with one boy (the song "I Want to Be Happy") and in the very next number (the title song) she wants to break free and run wild. The slightness of the plot often allowed star performers to run roughshod over the book, such as when Al Jolson notoriously stopped one performance of *The Honeymoon Express* (1913), told the audience how the story ended, and turned the rest of the night into a one-man concert.³⁹ Thus, while having a narrative, these early book musicals still contain some of the raucous energy that occurred in vaudeville and burlesque.⁴⁰

As the above description suggests, book musicals of the 1920s expressed the energetic optimistic abandon of the Jazz Age, the ascendancy of the United States, and faith in the opportunity for individual success. A number of the people writing songs for Broadway shows themselves personified this American Dream of "rags to riches," for a number of them came from Jewish immigrant stock.⁴¹ The rise of musical theatre helped spur a golden age of American songwriting, and key artists in this era were fundamental in shaping the emerging "musical" genre. A number of songwriters worked in musical theatre because it helped get their songs heard and popularized, but also because it potentially gave them greater power over their work. Although tunes written by various songwriters could be interpolated into one show, the 1920s started showing a tendency for a musical's score to be authored by one person or songwriting team. Operetta was where such practice was most common, and one of the top composers of the 1920s, Sigmund Romberg, wrote the scores for a number of long-running hits, such as *The Student Prince* (debuting on Broadway in 1924), *The Desert Song* (1926), and *The New Moon* (1927).⁴² On the other side of the spectrum was Irving Berlin, who began his career as a song plugger on Tin Pan Alley. A key figure in making ragtime accessible to mainstream white listeners, he became celebrated for an uncomplicated and direct manner in his lyrics, melodies, and chord patterns that matched the plain-spoken attitude that had become part of the US persona. Although he moved into musical theatre, he continued to write songs that could stand alone for potential sheet music and record sales. As such, Berlin never wrote operettas and initially seemed more comfortable writing for revues than for book musicals.⁴³

In between these two musical pioneers were a number of emerging talents that focused more particularly on exploring and defining the parameters of the book musical. Granted, a number writing for them still focused on cranking out popular stand-alone tunes, enhancing the sense that the songs had little to do with the story or characters. The writing team of Lew Brown, Buddy de Sylva, and Ray Henderson were one of the most popular working on Broadway in the 1920s, putting such hit songs as “The Varsity Drag,” “The Best Things in Life Are Free,” and “Button Up Your Overcoat” into musical comedies like *Good News!* (which premiered on Broadway in 1927) and *Hold Everything!* (1928). But others sought to expand the possibilities. The forerunner of this particular group was composer Jerome Kern. Kern became renowned for writing extended lyrical melodies, but in a less operatic vein than Romberg and other operetta composers, and he often worked with lyricists who used more American phrasing rather than flowery operatic language. Kern contributed to a number of typically lightweight musical comedies, but he also helped propel the book musical into more serious fare. Perhaps his most important work is *Show Boat* (with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein, debuting on Broadway in 1927), which took on American race relations and how American theatre itself was affected by such issues. As such, Kern’s score contains songs fit for operetta (“Make Believe”), versions of “coon songs” (“Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man”), and a blend of both styles (“Ol’ Man River”).⁴⁴

On a similar note, brothers George and Ira Gershwin wrote American popular music but regarded it as a serious form with artistic merit. Like Berlin, the Gershwins came from Jewish immigrant stock, were very much influenced by ragtime and jazz, and began writing for Tin Pan Alley before becoming involved in musical theatre. Lyricist Ira was a keen observer of American slang and pronunciation, as indicated by such song titles as “S’Wonderful” and “I Got Rhythm.” Composer George was also fascinated by the uniquely American sound of jazz, but added a new ingredient to the musical “melting pot”: the heritage of classical European music. George eventually expanded beyond Tin Pan Alley and Broadway theatre, into “Rhapsody in Blue,” the tone poem “An American in Paris,” and the operatic *Porgy and Bess* (which premiered on Broadway in 1935).⁴⁵

Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart broke into musical theatre after these others had been established, but their work seems even less concerned with following European models. Composer Rodgers spoke of being influenced by Kern rather than by Europeans, for example. Lyricist Hart matches Ira Gershwin in his love of American vernacular, such as his use of the Brooklyn accent in the line “The city’s clamor could never spoil/the dreams of a boy and goil” in “I’ll Take Manhattan.” Hart could also take American English and craft incredibly dexterous rhymes, such as in “Mountain Greenery”: “Beans could get no keener re-/ception in a beanery, bless our mountain greenery home.” The duo also continually sought projects that stretched the boundaries of what

book musicals could cover, including writing a score for a story about Chinese eunuchs (*Chee-Chee*, first produced in 1928).⁴⁶

The Jewish immigrant experience perhaps gave a number of these songwriters the ability to define a sense of American identity because they were “outsiders” working to assimilate into American society. Rodgers and Hart, though, came from an established Jewish middle-class background. Hart likely remained (at least in his own mind, according to biographers) an outsider due to his homosexuality. A short man who often drowned himself in alcohol, Hart’s lyrics often use wit to hide deep depression. Same-sex desire had existed for millennia, but the late 1800s witnessed the growth of a sense that certain individuals were prone to certain sexual desires, creating a new category of identity. Gay male communities began to coalesce in densely populated urban areas, including New York City. Theatre was a common milieu to find gay men, perhaps due to the emphasis on role-playing (going back to the time of Shakespeare when young actors would play the female parts). Yet, homosexuality was regarded as abnormal, sinful, and criminal. While Jewish artists were gradually assimilating, homosexuals by and large had to hide themselves. Many have interpreted Hart’s cynical humor as an expression of the tribulations that he and other homosexuals of the era faced.⁴⁷ Composer/lyricist Cole Porter was also gay. Porter, though, came from a Midwestern upper-middle-class Christian family, and spent much of his life living among the cognoscenti both in the States and in Europe. Like Hart, his songs contain a number of allusions to homosexuality, but perhaps less of an overarching sense of despair lurking beneath the repartee. Porter was also extremely adept at urbane humor and sophisticated rhyme, and understood well how to bring in rhythms and melodies from a variety of cultures, as in “Begin the Beguine” or a vaguely Hasidic tone that emerges at points in “My Heart Belongs to Daddy.”⁴⁸

One might notice the lack of notable female songwriters in this list. Some women did contribute, such as lyricists Dorothy Fields (who worked with Jerome Kern a number of times) and Dorothy Donnelly (who partnered with Sigmund Romberg repeatedly), but songwriting was regarded mainly as a male profession.⁴⁹ Similarly, while offering opportunities to a number of first- or second-generation European immigrants, the chances for African American composers were limited, even though the sound of Tin Pan Alley and Broadway had borrowed so heavily from African American culture. Eubie Blake perhaps succeeded the best at the time as a black composer within the Tin Pan Alley framework, most famously with “I’m Just Wild About Harry,” which was part of the score he wrote for a hit Broadway revue with an all-black cast, *Shuffle Along* (1921).⁵⁰

American music and dance had continually balanced between freedom and control because that dichotomy helped shape what it meant to be American. By the end of the 1920s, American popular music had come into its own, with

a cadre of composers and lyricists and with support from a vibrant industry. Similarly, a number of methods of presenting this music as a theatrical entertainment had become available: operettas, revues, book musicals (or musical comedies). The music of Tin Pan Alley and the Broadway musical both expressed energy and excitement towards modernity. They spoke to the power and potential of the individual, and yet created something that could be shared as a nation. The sheet music and recorded music industries, and the development of national radio networks had established a strong and profitable business structure for promoting and selling music. It was at this moment, as these aesthetic and industrial patterns established, that the musical motion picture was born.

Notes

- 1 Gerald Mast, *Can't Help Singin': The American Musical on Stage and Screen* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1987); Michael B. Druxman, *The Musical from Broadway to Hollywood* (New York: Barnes, 1980); Thomas S. Hischak, *Through the Screen Door: What Happened to the Broadway Musical When It Went to Hollywood* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004).
- 2 Tara C. Browner, "American Indian Music and Dance," *The 1999 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*; Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 3–14; from the perspective of a Navajo singer, see Frank Mitchell, *Navajo Blessingway Singer: The Autobiography of Frank Mitchell, 1881–1967*, ed. Charlotte J. Frisbie and David P. McAllester (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 1978.
- 3 For more on the use of music by early Protestant settlers, see Robert Stevenson, *Protestant Church Music in America: A Short Survey of Men and Movements from 1564 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966).
- 4 Forms of musical notation go back to ancient Samaria (approx. 2000 BC) and ancient Greece. Today's standard European model of musical notation seems to have originated with Guido d'Arezzo, a Benedictine monk in Italy around the turn of the first millennium. See Stefano Mengozzi, *The Renaissance Reform of Medieval Music Theory: Guido of Arezzo Between Myth and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 5 Barbara Lambert, ed., *Colonial Music in Massachusetts, 1630–1820: A Conference Held by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, May 17 and 18, 1973*, 2 vols. (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980).
- 6 Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).
- 7 Henry A. Kmen, *Music in New Orleans: The Formative Years, 1791–1841* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966).

- 8 On dancing in European courts of the period, see Richard T. Simmons, "Branles, Gavottes, and Contredanses in the Later Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *Dance Research* 15:2 (Winter 1997), 35–62; on American folk dancing during this period, see Joy Van Cleef and Kate Van Winkle Keller, "Selected American Country Dance and Their English Sources," in Lambert.
- 9 Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); see also Robert Christgau, "In Search of Jim Crow: Why Postmodern Minstrelsy Studies Matter," *The Believer* 2:1 (February 2004). http://www.believermag.com/issues/200402/?read=article_christgau
- 10 Susan L. Porter, *With an Air Debonair: Musical Theatre in America, 1785–1815* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).
- 11 Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Lott; Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds, *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).
- 12 Brian Seibert, *What the Eye Hears: A History of Tap Dancing* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).
- 13 On the carnivalesque potential of blackface, see Cockrell.
- 14 Lott; Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- 15 Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- 16 For more on the history of vaudeville, see Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 26–95; Charles W. Stein, ed., *American Vaudeville as Seen by Its Contemporaries* (New York: Knopf, 1984); Anthony Slide, *The Vaudevillians* (Westport: Arlington House, 1981); and John E. DiMeglio, *Vaudeville USA* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973).
- 17 Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).
- 18 Levine.
- 19 Allen.
- 20 See Helen Sheehy, *Eleanora Duse: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003) and Jane Kathleen Curry, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Theatre Managers* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).
- 21 For a history of operetta, see David Ewen, *European Light Opera* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962); Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From "H.M.S. Pinafore" to "Sweeney Todd"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

- 22 On Gilbert and Sullivan, see Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 23 Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 20–29. Mast, 7–15; Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) writes: “It is a cliché of American Musical comedy criticism that the genre began with the 1866 Niblo’s Garden performance of *The Black Crook*” (133). Julian Mates, “The Black Crook Myth,” *Theatre Survey* 7:1 (May 1966), 31–43, takes exception to the hallowed place this production has received in theatre history. Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 19–21, provides an evaluation of both sides of the discussion.
- 24 John McCabe, George M. Cohan: *The Man Who Owned Broadway* (New York: Doubleday, 1973).
- 25 Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
- 26 See Linda J. Tomko, *Dancing Class: Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Divides in American Dance, 1890–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- 27 Edward B. Marks, *They All Sang: From Tony Pastor to Rudy Vallee* (New York: Viking, 1934), provides a detailed description of Tin Pan Alley, including locations of many publishing firms; David A. Jasen, *Tin Pan Alley ... The Golden Age of American Popular Music from 1886 to 1956* (New York: Fine, 1988).
- 28 D.W. Krummel, “Counting Every Star; or Historical Statistics on Music Publishing in the United States (American Music Bibliography, IV),” *Anuario Interamericano de Investigacion Musical* 10 (1974), 186.
- 29 Joel Shrock, *The Gilded Age* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 190.
- 30 Other examples would include: “Daisy,” “School Days,” “In the Good Old Summertime,” “Meet Me in St. Louis,” and “The Band Played On.”
- 31 In retrospect, such an end result is perhaps ironic justice for Foster’s exploitation and reworking of African American music in the first place.
- 32 Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); William Burton Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Martin T. Williams, *The Jazz Tradition*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); also Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, eds., *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya: The Story of Jazz as Told by the Men Who Made It* (New York: Dover, 1966).
- 33 See Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, 1780–1880* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1980). Paul S. Carpenter, *Music: An Art and a Business* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 13, similarly opines that phonographs “are impoverishing the musical life of our regions by pre-empting the listening ear of every town, hamlet, and farm house in the nation ... convert[ing] a great many of our potential performers and

composers into passive listeners.” Rick Altman concludes *The American Film Musical* with similar dire predictions that manufactured music has the potential to eliminate the pleasures of amateur music making, actually asking at one point: “Where has the harmonica gone, and the jew’s harp? Who among us can still play the ukulele, the auto-harp, or the washboard? Where is the old practice of singing at the work place alive today? Does anyone still sing rounds? When did you last hear someone whistling a tune?” (351).

- 34 The 1920 US Census was the first to indicate that more of the country’s population lived in or near big cities than in rural areas, a situation that has only increased since then.
- 35 On the development of Broadway and the overall emergence of modern metropolitan New York City life, see Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin’ Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
- 36 On 1920s American operetta, see Ethan Mordden, *Make Believe: The Broadway Musical of the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 36–52, 161–183; and Bordman, *American Operetta*, 112–139.
- 37 Linda Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
- 38 See Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Revue: From the Passing Show to Sugar Babies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 39 For a more detailed history of the production, see Herbert G. Goldman, *Jolson: The Legend Comes to Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 73–81.
- 40 Mordden.
- 41 Kenneth Aaron Kanter, *The Jews of Tin Pan Alley: The Jewish Contribution to American Popular Music, 1830–1940* (New York: American Jewish Archives, 1982).
- 42 On Sigmund Romberg, see William A. Everett, *Sigmund Romberg* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
- 43 On Irving Berlin, see Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (New York: Viking, 1990).
- 44 On Jerome Kern, Stephen Banfield, *Jerome Kern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
- 45 On the Gershwins, Steven E. Gilbert, *The Music of Gershwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), and Philip Furia, *Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 46 Richard Rodgers provides his own account of his work with Lorenz Hart in *Musical Stages* (New York: Random House, 1975). For a more complex and less idealized account of their working relationship, see Gary Marmorstein, *A Ship Without a Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

- 47 Marmorstein provides an analysis of the potential relationship between Hart's sexual orientation and his lyrics.
- 48 On Cole Porter, see Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), and Joseph Morella and George Mazzei, *Genius and Lust: The Creativity and Sexuality of Cole Porter and Noel Coward* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1995).
- 49 On female songwriters in musical theatre, see Sharon Guertin Shafer, "The Women of Tin Pan Alley," paper given at College Music Society Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference, George Mason University, March 20–21, 2009. (<http://www.trinitydc.edu/academic-affairs/files/2010/03/Women-of-Tin-Pan-Alley.pdf>)
- 50 On Eubie Blake, see Al Rose, *Eubie Blake* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979). Also see Thomas L. Riis, *More than Just Minstrel Shows: The Rise of Black Musical Theatre at the Turn of the Century* (Brooklyn: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1992).

