Rethinking the Diegetic-Nondiegetic Distinction in the Film Musical

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Abstract:

This paper exposes problems with diegetic-nondiegetic distinction as applied to film musicals, arguing that it is inconsistent with its use in other areas of cinema studies and poses problems for appreciating the narratives of these films. As a replacement, the author defines two scalar concepts, one tracking the number's degree of realism, the other its degree of formality.

The concept of the “diegetic number” has become as central to scholarship on film musicals as “diegetic music” is to other genres of film. In connection with musicals on both stage and screen, a “number” standardly refers to a performance of music and/or dancing by named fictional characters or such a performance that is imagined by them. In *The Band Wagon* (1953), a musical about putting on a Broadway show, the numbers commonly classified as “diegetic” include those that comprise this fictional show (“New Sun in the Sky,” “I Guess I’ll Have to Change My Plan,” “Louisiana Hayride,” “Triplets,” and “Girl Hunt Ballet”) as well as rehearsals (“You and the Night and the Music”), characters’ performances in other shows (the leading lady’s ballet performance “The Beggar’s Waltz” and the director’s production of *Oedipus rex*), and the cast’s post-show singalong “I Love Louisa.” These numbers are standardly contrasted with those that take place outside of contexts where one is likely to sing and dance, such as when one is alighting from a train (“By Myself”), getting a shoe-shine (“A Shine on Your Shoes”),

debating the nature of art and entertainment (“That’s Entertainment”), or taking a stroll through Central Park (“Dancing in the Dark”). Such numbers are sometimes referred to as “nondiegetic,” though there is less consensus on the most appropriate antithesis to “diegetic” in this context.¹

Examining the processes by which scholars arrive at such conclusions reveals that different reasoning is at work than that employed in differentiating diegetic from nondiegetic music in non-musical films as well as portions of film musicals that do not constitute musical or dance numbers. Although the utility of the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction remains a contentious topic within scholarship on film music, these terms do have a relatively stable meaning in the context of non-musical films.² Diegetic music is music with a fictional source, whether that source is represented on-screen or merely implied.³ In other words, diegetic music is music that the fictional characters could, in theory, hear. As an illustration of the kinds of rationalization processes that factor into such determinations, let’s take a portion of *The Band Wagon* that does not constitute a musical or dance number.

When rehearsals for the initial version of the fictional show “The Band Wagon” are not going well, its leading lady Gaby (Cyd Charisse) asks her co-star Tony (Fred Astaire) if he thinks that a ballerina like her and a song-and-dance man like him “can really dance together.” To find out, they take a carriage ride to Central Park. Upon their arrival, we hear an instrumental rendition of the song “High and Low.”⁴ With no fictional source initially identified, it is reasonable to assume that the music is nondiegetic. Partway through the next shot, however, dancers enter the frame. Their coordination with the music makes it clear that they can hear it. Even before the camera pans to reveal a dance band, the music’s status as diegetic is unambiguous.⁵

Turning to film-musical numbers, classifications of diegetic status typically apply to the entirety of the audio-visual display, including not only on-screen performances of singing and dancing but also any instrumental accompaniment, whether or not it is shown on-screen. (Some scholars argue for disjunctive conclusions in connection with numbers like “I Love Louisa,” which pair realistic singing and dancing with orchestral accompaniment that lacks a plausible fictional source.⁶ Regarding performances of singing and dancing as inseparable from their accompaniments, I do not believe it is coherent to reach different conclusions with regard to their diegetic status.) If numbers are performances of music and/or dancing by fictional characters, they all have a fictional source. Thus, classifications of diegetic status hinge on different criteria, namely, the degree to which the number conforms to the norms and expectations of human behavior and capability in the real world.

To see what a nondiegetic number looks like, let’s return to Tony and Gaby’s stroll, following it to its eventual culmination in the number “Dancing in the Dark.” Tony and Gaby do not tarry among the dancers but move, unspeaking, towards a more private portion of the park. At the next cut, the musical style shifts to something more along the lines of Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé*. Exotic instruments like English horn and extended-tertian harmonies rule out the possibility of a realistic fictional source. Seemingly animated by a swell in the strings, Gaby executes a graceful turn, a movement echoed by Tony, whose subsequent steps are precisely timed with the flute and harp’s bell-like tones. They strike a pose, as if waiting for their song to begin. When it does, they proceed to improvise a flawless dance duet marrying ballroom steps with balletic pirouettes and leaps.

Even though Tony and Gaby are professional dancers, and thus could be expected to perform at the level of terpsichoric mastery on display in this number, producing such a

performance in the real world would not only require a choreographer to work out how to effectively combine their respective dance idioms but also rehearsal. More fundamentally, this is not how people, even professional dancers, take a stroll through Central Park. (Readers who remain inclined to classify “Dancing in the Dark” as diegetic on account of the characters’ professions are encouraged to substitute a number like “Cool” from *West Side Story* [1961], which represents a street gang displaying astonishing dancing abilities.)

This paper exposes problems in the use of the terms diegetic and nondiegetic in discussions of film-musical numbers. The idiosyncratic use of these terms in connection with film musicals not only poses obstacles to effective scholarly dialogues across film genres but also leads to logical problems when criteria for diegetic status from non-musical films is combined with the realism criterion presupposed by scholars of film musicals. Before exploring these problems, a brief survey of the usage history of the term diegesis and its adjectival forms will shed some light on how we got into the present predicament.

The Diegesis and Realism

The term diegesis originates in Plato’s attempts to distinguish between two primary modes of storytelling.⁷ Its antithesis, mimesis (“imitation” in most translations), refers to the kind of storytelling one finds in the theater: actors portraying fictional characters by representing, by means of imitation, the characters’ speech and bodily comportment. By contrast, diegesis (“narration”) involves a single storyteller who makes no attempt to imitate the speech or actions of the *dramatis personae*. As an example of pure diegesis, Plato cites the choral hymns (*dithyramb*) associated with the cult of Dionysus. Epic poetry’s reliance on directly quoted speech placed it in a third, mixed category for Plato.

Flash forward to the mid-twentieth-century, French philosopher and film critic Étienne Souriau brought the term *diegesis* into the emerging scholarly discourse on cinema.

Unfortunately, the term is all that he brought. Souriau uses *diégèse* to distinguish between the profilmic events the camera captured and what these images represent in the fictional world of the film. He defines *diégèse* as “all that is intelligible within the narrative, in the world implied or suggested in the fiction of a film” and *diégétique* as “any event concerning the characters of a story which involves them in a change of position within the space contained in the narrative.”⁸ Far from referring to a mode of storytelling, Souriau’s term *diégèse* refers to both the totality of fictional events as well as the fictional world in which those events take place.

The differences between Plato’s and Souriau’s use of the term is captured in French by the distinction between *diégésis* (Plato’s meaning: a purely narrative mode of storytelling) and *diégèse* (Souriau’s: the fictional story and story-world). The English language is impoverished, by comparison, in possessing only one word to refer to these two concepts, a situation that has caused some confusion, even among experts in narratology and its impressive assortment of jargon.⁹ In light of Souriau’s lack of interest in Plato’s meaning, and the Greek term’s ponderous indigestibility (to echo a quip from Jean Mitry), one might wish that he had chosen a different term entirely.¹⁰ Particularly in English-language discourse, I believe that clarity would be better served by substituting phrases like “fictional world” or “totality of facts about the story.” Yet, having withstood half a century of use and numerous critiques, the complete dislodgment of the term “diegesis” from the scholarly discourse on cinema seems as unlikely as its incorporation into the non-scholarly discourse on any subject.

From French film theory, *diégèse* entered literary narratology through the work of Gérard Genette. In “Discours du récit,” Genette follows Souriau’s two-fold meaning as both the contents

of the story and the story-world.¹¹ However, in his later *Palimpsestes* and *Nouveau discours du récit*, Genette denies the former sense, claiming that Souriau intended *diégèse* to refer to a fictional “*universe* rather than a train of events (a story).”¹² Regardless of whether Genette accurately represents Souriau’s intentions with regard to the meaning of *diégèse*, Genette’s intention for it to refer to a world rather than a story proved influential on subsequent film theory, particularly in its examination of the role of sound and music.

Although Claudia Gorbman’s *Unheard Melodies* (1987) has done much to place the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction at the center of discussions of film music, she was not the first person to apply these concepts to film sound. The first edition of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s popular textbook *Film Art* (1979) contains the following definitions: “If the source of a sound is a character or object in the story space of the film, we call the sound *diegetic*. The voices of the characters, sounds made by objects in the story, or music coming from instruments in the story space are all diegetic sound. On the other hand, there is *nondiegetic* sound, which does not come from a source in the story space.”¹³ Bordwell and Thompson follow Genette’s subsequent understanding of *diégèse*, defining diegetic music as music that spectators are invited to imagine as comprising part of the fictional world. Since the music’s source can be either on- or off-screen, the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction does not precisely map onto the industry terms “source music” and “background scoring,” which track whether the performers appear on-screen for the purposes of determining their rate of pay.¹⁴

Somewhere in the development of the scholarly discourse on film sound and music, the diegetic became synonymous with the realistic. Most explicit on this score is David Neumeyer, who introduces the concept of diegetic sound via Christian Metz’s concept of “spatial anchoring,” which Neumeyer defines as “the degree to which a recorded sound is ‘attached’ to

its object—in effect a measure of its ‘diegetic-ness’ or its ‘realism.’”¹⁵ In his ensuing analysis of *Casablanca* (1942), Neumeyer reasons that “diegetic [music] must be ‘realistic’ ... how can we be convinced that the [characters] hear it otherwise?”¹⁶

Neumeyer’s assumption that the fictional worlds of films are governed by the same acoustic laws and social conventions as our world is unproblematic in the case of *Casablanca*. Applying such an assumption to many film musicals, however, leads to a variety of contradictions, particularly when Neumeyer’s realism criterion is combined with the Souriau’s definition of the diegetic as contents of the audio-visual display that represent contents of or occurrences in the fictional world. The precise ways in which film musicals depart from the norms and conventions of our world depend on the musical in question. Several commonplace fantastical qualities of film musicals arise in Neumeyer’s attempts to determine the diegetic status of “The Trolley Song” from *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944):

although [Esther] and her several friends move throughout the trolley in the course of the number, the sound is remarkably consistent with that of a person standing in front of a stationary microphone with a chorus behind her. And what do we make of the orchestra? Is it diegetic? No physical space can reasonably be imagined for the orchestra members to occupy (the sidewalk? another trolley following behind?) Is the orchestra non-diegetic? If so, then the singing cannot be diegetic, since it is utterly implausible that a large group of persons would all be singing to an imaginary orchestra.¹⁷

The audio recording of film-musical numbers is typically conducted prior to the filming of the visuals (exceptions include *Love Me Tonight* [1932] and most of *Les Misérables* [2012]).¹⁸ As such, the acoustic properties of the sound recording may bear little relation to the acoustics of

the fictional space represented in the film or the configuration of the fictional characters. And, as Neumeyer observes, characters in musicals often sing and dance to accompaniment with no plausible fictional source. Furthermore, singing and dancing often take place in unrealistic situations. Aside from the phenomenon of flash-mobs, people in our world do not tend to spontaneously burst into song whilst taking public transit. Even backstage or show musicals like *The Band Wagon* typically contain numbers that do not take place on stage or in rehearsal (*Cabaret* [1972] is exceptional in this regard).¹⁹ In their capacities for expression through song and dance, characters in musicals—whether professional performers, prospective nuns, cowboys, or gang members—vastly exceed average levels of human capability in our world. Musical like *The Band Wagon* naturalize the extraordinary performances of Cyd Charisse and Fred Astaire by casting them as professional performers. Nevertheless, their spontaneous improvisation of exquisitely choreographed song-and-dance numbers strain plausibility.

The fantastical character of film musicals may also extend to their visual components. As Robynn Stilwell has remarked, “the visuals of your basic Busby Berkeley extravaganza are far more ‘nondiegetic’ than the music.”²⁰ Most numbers are framed as performances or rehearsals for a Broadway show, beginning with shots of an orchestra, conductor, audience, and proscenium arch, but quickly cut to a space far more expansive than the one shown in these framing shots, including improbable mise-en-scène (e.g., “By a Waterfall” from *Footlight Parade* [1933] contains a giant swimming pool and a half dozen waterslides), where effects that could never be realized in a live performance take place, such as instantaneous changes of setting or costume (e.g., “I Only Have Eyes for You” [Reprise] from *Dames* [1934]) and reverse-motion shots (e.g., “The Words Are in My Heart” from *Gold Diggers of 1935*).

Observing the different conventions governing film musicals in contrast to most other genres of film, some scholars have concluded that the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction is inapplicable to this genre.²¹ Such statements occur primarily in the context of studies focusing on non-musical films, however. By and large, scholars specializing in the film musical disagree.

Jane Feuer understands diegetic numbers as those that are integral to the plot of the film. In connection with *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), she remarks: “You can’t exactly take the numbers away – they are diegetic.”²² The fact that they do not represent realistic behavior is not troubling for Feuer. In fact, she implies that diegetic numbers typically take place outside of realistic performance contexts and often take on fantastical characteristics: “In *Strictly Ballroom*, the numbers are not quite diegetic, in the sense that they are motivated by the dancers’ profession rather than life itself, and yet there is clearly a level that elevates the dancing to a higher, less realistic realm in the way that numbers functioned in Busby Berkeley musicals.”²³

If Feuer’s understanding of the diegetic number were commonplace, there would be few points of disagreement between scholars of film musicals and their colleagues specializing in other genres of film. Unfortunately, Feuer’s understanding does not reflect the prevailing currents of discourse on the film musical. More typically, diegetic numbers are defined as those that take place in realistic performance contexts, such as performances of shows, auditions, rehearsals, instances of improvisation (“Hot Lunch Jam” from *Fame* [1980]) or composition (“Ka-lu-a” and the first occurrence of “They Didn’t Believe Me” from *Till the Clouds Roll By* [1946]), recording sessions (“Don’t Leave Me Now” from *Jailhouse Rock* [1957]), singing or dancing contests (“Hand Jive” from *Grease* [1978]), family gatherings (“Edelweiss” from *The Sound of Music* [1965]), social dances (“Disco Inferno” from *Saturday Night Fever* [1977]), parties (“Skip to My Lou” from *Meet Me in St. Louis*), serenades (“Looking at You” from

Everyone Says I Love You), singalongs (“I Love Louisa” from *The Band Wagon*), and lullabies (“Stay Awake” from *Marry Poppins* [1964]). For numbers taking place outside of such contexts, a verbal acknowledgement of the singing or dancing also seems to do the trick. Scott McMillin classifies the opening number of *Oklahoma!* (1955), “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning,” as a diegetic number because, when Aunt Eller asks Curly what he’s doing, he reports that he’s singing.²⁴ After he finishes the final chorus of his song, Aunt Eller expresses her desire that Curly could sing to her every evening.

Much singing and dancing that goes on in film musicals lacks both a realistic context and an explicit verbal acknowledgement. In scholarship on film musicals, there is less consensus about how to categorize such numbers. Although some scholars have adopted the antithesis common to non-musical films, nondiegetic, a variety of alternatives have been proposed, including “supradiegetic music” (Rick Altman and Guido Heldt), “Musically Enhanced Reality Mode” or MERM for short (Raymond Knapp), “book song” (James Leve, borrowed from stage-musical terminology), and “out-of-the-blue number” (Scott McMillin).²⁵

Despite a lack of terminological consensus, most scholars agree that diegetic songs are realistic songs. This understanding is based on the assumption that all fictional worlds adhere to the physical laws and social conventions of the world in which we live, an assumption easily debunked by pointing to the existence of predominantly fantastical film genres, including science fiction, fantasy, and arguably, film musicals. Furthermore, the equation of the diegetic with the realistic is inconsistent with the understanding of the diegetic in other areas of cinema studies, particularly in connection with films’ visual components. As Jeff Smith has remarked, “nowhere else in film studies is the notion of the ‘diegetic’ wholly equated with a concept of realism. Elements of mise-en-scène or cinematography, for example, are often treated in highly stylized

fashion.” Consider the expressionist mise-en-scène featured in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) or the components of the fictional world represented by 2D chalk drawings in Lars von Trier’s *Dogville* (2003). Such flagrant departures from the visual appearance of the world in which we live do not “disqualify [these] spaces and objects from being considered part of the film’s diegesis.”²⁶

Encountering such phenomena, spectators are more likely to consider the possibility that the filmmakers are inviting them to imagine a world that is unlike the real world in at least these respects. Such an approach bears a closer affinity to Souriau’s original concept of the diegesis in cinema than forcing the fictional world to correspond to our understanding of reality. In a study of mid-twentieth-century French film theory, Edward Lowry explains that Souriau believed that each film “creates its own universe, with its own rules, systems of belief, characters, settings, etc. This is just as true of a Neorealist film like *Bicycle Thief* as it is of a fantasy film like René Clair’s *I Married a Witch*,” or a film musical like *Meet Me in St. Louis*.²⁷ There is nothing in Souriau’s account to suggest that a film could not represent a world in which characters regularly burst into song and dance, whether they are performing on Broadway, strolling through Central Park, or riding on a trolley.

Unconscious Singing to Unheard Melodies?

Given that the adjective “diegetic” standardly picks out contents of the audio-visual display that represent contents of the fictional world, referring to only the realistic songs of a musical as diegetic implies that the rest of the songs do not represent occurrences in the fictional world. This assumption is especially problematic for numbers that advance the story in some way. Such numbers are often described as being “integrated” with the narrative of the film. In recent years, the concept of integration has become increasingly fraught as to its meaning as well

as its importance and artistic value in connection with musicals on both stage and screen.

Engaging in the latter debate would be an unnecessary distraction. Yet, in the interest of clarity, the former issue cannot simply be brushed aside.

John Mueller has defined no less than six different senses in which a number may be said to be integrated with the film's narrative. Of primary interest in the present connection is the strongest sense he defines: the number's content makes new things true in the story, either about characters' personalities, relationships, and endeavors, or about the nature of the fictional world. In other words, removing the number from the musical would sacrifice narrative logic.²⁸ As several scholars have observed, most numbers fail this test, even those in shows commonly considered to be highly integrated.²⁹ According to current linguistic use, the concept of the integrated number is broader than the most robust sense of integration defined by Mueller. Nevertheless, I am focusing on numbers that generate new story facts because it is these numbers that pose the most difficulties for the prevailing understanding of the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction in connection with film musicals.

Mueller cites "Dancing in the Dark" as an example of a number that advances the story through its content.³⁰ During the course of the number, Tony and Gaby not only find an answer to Gaby's question of whether they can really dance together, but they also find love. A comparison of the before and after shots of the couple in the carriage make the latter point most forcefully. On their ride to the park, they pointedly keep their distance from one another, but after their dance, they glide into the carriage, Tony naturally clasps Gaby's hand, and they sink into an after-glow moment of blissful contentment. Labelling this number as nondiegetic (or one's preferred antithesis) suggests that it is extricable from the narrative. Since the number

cannot be removed without a gap in logic, it must represent something about the development of Tony and Gaby's relationship.

Perhaps the number represents a series of entirely realistic occurrences (walking, talking, gesticulating), which have only been rendered as dancing because *The Band Wagon* is a musical. In other words, if we were to enter Tony and Gaby's world and spy on them during "Dancing in the Dark," we would see no dancing and hear no music. Instead, we would witness the characters walking and, though speech and realistic gestures, expressing their feelings and working out a plan for how to combine their respective dance idioms.³¹

The problem with such an approach is that it renders the changes the characters undergo in this number less plausible. The change in the characters' attitudes towards the prospects of their joint artistic endeavor is especially difficult to explain if the characters are merely having a conversation about dance during "Dancing in the Dark," as opposed to actually trying out some dance moves and being successful in this endeavor. Imagining that the characters are communicating through song and dance may also render more plausible the alacrity with which they fall in love. In a summary of the tropes of musical numbers, Raymond Knapp and Mitchell Morris note that characters are "more capable of interpersonal connection" while they are singing and dancing.³² The tendency for singing and dancing to forge social bonds more quickly and effectively than spoken conversation is also supported by empirical research.³³

Alternatively, one might follow a suggestion made by Neumeyer: "if a song is not a 'public' performance but an expression of the [character's] subjectivity; under such circumstances it is plausible that the [character] does not know that he or she is performing."³⁴ Applying similar logic to "Dancing in the Dark," one might imagine that Tony and Gaby are actually dancing but they do so unconsciously. Such suggestions are often accompanied by the

proposal that other fictional characters do not have perceptual access to such performances. For instance, McMillin's suggestion that Aunt Eller "hears [Curly's] song just as we hear it" implies that she and Laurey do *not* hear the cowboy's next song "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," since it is not explicitly identified as a song.³⁵ A potential problem is that some characters in musicals hear the music of the so-called nondiegetic songs and, in their subsequent musical performances, show that they have been influenced by this music.

Just as Tony and Gaby's love develops through their successful marriage of dance styles, lovers in musicals often have a musical-stylistic influence over one another. The musical influence Eliza seems to exert over Higgins in *My Fair Lady* (1964) is one reason why the pair are a more plausible love match by the end of the musical than they are by the end of Shaw's play.³⁶ At the beginning of the film, however, this eventuality is practically unthinkable. Not only are they separated by age and class but they lack a common mode of discourse. Despite being the leading phoneticist of his generation, Henry Higgins (Rex Harrison) cannot sing. By Higgins's estimation, Eliza (acted by Audrey Hepburn but sung by Marni Nixon) cannot speak (but as soon as she opens her mouth to sing, she more than makes up for it). Like Tony and Gaby's relationship, their union hinges on a compromise being struck. That the ostensible plot revolves around Eliza's English diction lessons suggests that the burden of this compromise will be chiefly borne by the woman through her absorption of the teachings of her elder male companion (as per usual).³⁷ Listening to their respective musical idioms, however, suggests that Eliza has just as much to teach Higgins, her course of instruction being on the subject of how to be a character in a musical.³⁸

Eliza's musical influence on Higgins has been observed by many scholars in connection with the musical's incarnations on both stage and screen. In Higgins's final number "I've Grown

Accustomed to Her Face,” his digressions about Eliza marrying Freddy are transpositions of Eliza’s rant-song “Just You Wait.”³⁹ The problem, for our purposes, is that it is unclear how much of Eliza’s song Higgins overhears. She only begins to sing after Higgins has retreated to his office and shut the door. Although Higgins makes an appearance in the middle of the number when he is marched out and shot, these occurrences are framed as figments of Eliza’s imagination. At the end of the number, Higgins is revealed to be watching her from the top of the stairs.⁴⁰ Evidently he has caught the tail end of the spectacle. Less evident is whether he has heard enough of it to establish the similarities between “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face” and “Just You Wait” as intentional appropriations.

A stronger argument for Higgins’s hearing of Eliza’s music is his gradual acculturation into the conventions of the musical. For most of the film, Higgins talks his way into his numbers, his “singing” only ever achieving the tunefulness of *Sprechstimme*. Furthermore, he proves incapable of conforming his “sung” utterances to conventional song forms.⁴¹ In his first song, “Why Can’t the English,” he sets up a standard AABA structure for the chorus only to spoil it at the very last second by avoiding the expected rhyme and (harmonic) cadence in favor of a rant about the Scottish, Irish, and American dialects (Table 1). Eventually, he returns to the chorus, but before he even reaches the contrasting B section, his mention of the French prompts another spoken digression. To hear how an AABA chorus ought to go, one has only to listen to Eliza’s “Wouldn’t It Be Lovely” or “I Could Have Danced All Night.”

Higgins’s final song, “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” is based on another standard song form of his period, ABAC (with a short coda based on A). After singing it through once, he indulges in one final, though exceptionally long, rant-fantasy about the wretchedness of Eliza’s fate as Mrs. Freddy Eynsford-Hill (sung to “Just You Wait”) and a reprise of both the

narcissistic verse and misogynistic chorus of “I’m an Ordinary Man.” But before Higgins manages to retreat to his home, the orchestra bursts in with a glamorous version of the A section of “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” calling Higgins on his lie. Seeming to take their cue, he joins in, completing the rest of the song in as tuneful a voice as Rex Harrison could muster, without a single rant or digression. In so doing, Raymond Knapp has remarked, Higgins demonstrates that “he *has* noticed her and is trying to approximate ‘the tune / She whistles night and noon.’”⁴²

Examples of characters influencing the musical style of other characters seem to provide evidence that characters in musicals not only sing consciously but hear each other’s singing. However, this is not the only way of explaining the gradual rapprochement of Higgins’s and Eliza’s musical idioms. One could interpret their similarity in a purely symbolic way. Without Higgins intending to model his singing on Eliza’s, his songs take on characteristics of hers, their emerging musical similarity representing their growing attraction and suitability for each other.

Another alternative explanation is McMillin’s proposal that the characters “sing their way into the ‘voice of the musical.’” McMillin borrows this phrase from Carolyn Abbate’s concept of the “voice of the opera.” As he explains, the voice of the musical refers to “a melodic and harmonic world in which various characters enter at various times, not so much because they are like one another psychologically (although they may be), but because they belong to the same aesthetic design.”⁴³ To be clear, McMillin is referring to the composer’s aesthetic design, but if one wished to sidestep the figure of the composer (as Abbate is wont to do), one could also refer to the aesthetic design of the work itself.

In weighing the interpretive gains and losses of these proposals, it will be useful to distinguish two different ways of looking at a narrative.⁴⁴ From an internal perspective, we

regard the narrative as actual, seeking explanations that are grounded in the characters' intentions and actions as well as the fictional social and political contexts in which they are acting.

Alternatively, we could regard it from an external perspective, recognizing that it has been crafted by a real-life author or authorial team and explaining its features in terms of those agents' intentions and actions as well as the real-life artistic, social, and political contexts in which they were working. Appreciating narratives generally requires us to employ these perspectives in tandem, although one perspective may assume salience at particular moments or in conjunction with particular interpretive questions.

Returning to the question of how to interpret Higgins's and Eliza's shared music, if the musical numbers of *My Fair Lady* are regarded as nondiegetic (aside from the dancing at the ball, all numbers are fantastical), only external perspectives are open to us. We cannot understand Eliza as influencing Higgins because Eliza lacks the requisite knowledge and intentions. According to some scholars, Eliza and Higgins aren't singing at all. According to others, they are singing but they do not know that they are and they do not hear each other's music. Under either of these interpretations, Higgins does not hear Eliza's singing and, thus, cannot be understood as being influenced by her, either consciously or unconsciously. Regarding the singing as nondiegetic, one can explain their similarity as part of the author's, implied author's, or fictional narrator's attempts to represent their growing attraction or compatibility. Or, regarding these similarities as irrelevant to the narrative, one could attribute them to the composer's stylistic preferences and attempts at musical unity.

Regarding the numbers of *My Fair Lady* as diegetic, by contrast, allows for a wider range of possible explanations. In addition to the foregoing external explanations, we have recourse to internal explanations of various kinds. We can regard Eliza as choosing to sing in a particular

way and Higgins as overhearing Eliza's singing and being influenced, with greater or lesser degrees of consciousness, by her more lyrical and formally coherent vocal utterances. Due to the indeterminacy surrounding how much of "Just You Wait" Higgins overhears, we could either regard him as consciously appropriating some of Eliza's melodies or regard these similarities as authorial commentary.

Interpreting fantastical numbers as diegetic allows for explanations of their musical features that are grounded in the characters' actions and intentions rather than merely those of the filmmakers, thus endowing characters with more agency. In light of the importance of agency to characters that are worth watching, and thus narratives that are worth watching, regarding even fantastical numbers as diegetic may increase one's appreciation of the stories musicals tell.⁴⁵

There are, however, cases where it is not reasonable to regard characters as intending or perceiving all of the meanings their performances may have for us. In *The Music Man* (1962), for instance, Marian's "Goodnight My Someone" and Harold's "Seventy-Six Trombones" are revealed to have the same melody when they are combined near the conclusion of the film. Since Marian sings her song before she hears Harold's, and Harold does not hear the first instance of Marian's song, this similarity cannot be attributed to the characters exerting an influence over one another. To explain their musical similarity, we need to take an external perspective to the narrative, regarding it as representing the characters' underlying similarity. But external explanations are still available to the viewer pursuing diegetic interpretations of fantastical numbers.

Since diegetic interpretations afford the viewer greater interpretive flexibility and increase character agency, I propose that the default assumption in watching film musicals is that

the characters sing and dance consciously and have perceptual access to the performances they and others make, including its accompaniment, whether or not it has a plausible fictional source.⁴⁶ In other words, virtually all numbers, whether realistic or fantastical, are diegetic in both of Souriau's senses. They comprise part of the fictional world of the film and are part of the film's story. Possible exceptions would include instances where the number, in whole or in part, is framed as a character's dream, imagining, or hallucination (e.g., the imagined ballet at the end of *An American in Paris* [1951]), or represents authorial commentary (e.g., "Razzle Dazzle" from *Chicago* [2002]).⁴⁷

Replacing the Diegetic-Nondiegetic Distinction

Due to the disjuncture in use of the terms diegetic and nondiegetic in scholarship on film musicals as compared with other areas of cinema studies, and the impoverished interpretive possibilities open to those pursuing nondiegetic understandings of fantastical numbers, I propose that we abandon the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction as a means of classifying film-musical numbers. That is not to deny that there are relevant distinctions to be made between numbers like "Dancing in the Dark" and those that comprise Tony and Gaby's fictional Broadway show "The Band Wagon," but merely to suggest that it is misleading to characterize these distinctions in terms of diegetic status.

In a study of Busby Berkeley's career, Martin Rubin proposes two alternative sets of oppositions. In addition to the distinction between "realistic" and "unrealistic" numbers, Rubin proposes distinguishing between "performance" and "narrative" numbers. The former refers to "numbers taking place in a formal performance situation (e.g., on a theatrical stage or a bandstand)"; the latter to "numbers intruding themselves directly into a fictional situation (e.g., two lovers, in the midst of a romantic scene, burst into a song affirming their love for one

another).”⁴⁸ As the oeuvre of Busby Berkeley amply demonstrates, the category of formal performance does not precisely map onto that of realistic performance. Since the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction conflates these categories, Rubin’s model constitutes an improvement in sophistication. Nevertheless, there are a few problems with his categories.

Rubin’s choice of the terms realistic and unrealistic establishes a binary opposition when a scalar concept more aptly describes the range of behavior on display in film musicals. Additionally, his performance and narrative categories are only vaguely defined. Based on his categorizations, domestic music-making or dancing, either by amateurs or professionals, falls under the narrative category.⁴⁹ Rubin’s categorizations are based on an overly narrow construal of “performance,” one that fails to accord with general linguistic use. The use of “narrative” as an opposition to “performance” also suggests that formal performances are invariably superfluous to the narratives in which they are a part. Although this may be true of Busby Berkeley’s films, it fails to hold true for the genre as a whole. In *The Music Man*, when Harold sings “Seventy-Six Trombones” at the town meeting, he is undoubtedly performing, but his performance is integral to the narrative. It excites the imaginations and musicality of the townsfolk, constituting a significant development in his plot to con them into buying band instruments.

Instead of Rubin’s opposition between realistic and unrealistic numbers, I propose a spectrum ranging from extreme realism to extreme fantasy. At the former end lie the numbers of *Cabaret*, which all take place in realistic situations by characters with realistic levels of skill and plausible accompaniments.⁵⁰ At the latter lie the visual components of “I Only Have Eyes for You” (Reprise) from *Dames* (the aural components are more or less realistic). The realism-fantasy spectrum would also be a means of differentiating numbers that have a realistic fictional

source for their accompaniments (e.g., the numbers comprising “The Band Wagon”) and those that do not (e.g., “Dancing in the Dark”).

Tracking where numbers fall on the realism-fantasy spectrum is of relevance to examining the musical’s tendency to represent an idealized or utopian vision of the world. Jane Feuer and Rick Altman have interpreted the musical’s characteristic distinction between its musical and non-musical segments as mapping onto the distinction between reality and dreams, or the real and the ideal.⁵¹ Not all numbers are equally idealistic, however. As an illustration of the different associations and expressive effects of realism and fantasy, let’s compare the two reprises of “The Sound of Music,” one that is moderately fantastical, the other entirely realistic.

The first, more fantastical one occurs immediately after the Captain dismisses Maria from his service. Like a *deus ex machina*, the children’s performance of the song for the Baroness wafts its way onto the terrace where their conversation is taking place. At first, its aural characteristics are entirely realistic, but as the Captain follows the sound to its source and stands transfixed at the door, its realistic guitar accompaniment is replaced by an orchestra.⁵² By the time he joins in, a harp glissando leads into the final chorus, flutes take over the descant line, and horns support the final crescendo. After a moment of rapt silence, the Captain shows his children the first gesture of affection depicted in the film, the first, one assumes, since the death of his wife. The song’s ability to magically heal old wounds and knit the family back together appears to be related to its fantastical character. By contrast, the children’s mournful reprise after Maria has returned to the abbey remains entirely realistic and is unable to provide them any solace.

Instead of Rubin’s performance and narrative categories, I propose a gradational concept that tracks the performance’s degree of formality as well as its intended function. At the formal end of the spectrum, there are numbers with a strict separation of performers and audience

members, where the performance is intended primarily for aesthetic appreciation or entertainment. Unlike Rubin's "performance" category, my category of formal performance includes domestic music-making or dancing by amateurs, such as the children's sad performance of "The Sound of Music." On the other end of the spectrum are spontaneous performances that are intended primarily for communicative or expressive purposes, which often have no audience other than the performers themselves. Soliloquies (e.g., Maria singing "The Sound of Music" on the mountain) and love duets (e.g., "Dancing in the Dark") fall into this category as well as conversations like "Can't Say No" from *Oklahoma!* and "Maria" from *The Sound of Music*. In between these extremes lie communal performances, in which audience members have a tendency to become performers during the course of the number. Such songs and dances are intended as much for community building or improving the mood of loved ones as for aesthetic appreciation or entertainment. After the unmitigated disaster that was the initial performance of "The Band Wagon," Tony and the songwriters attempt to lift the spirits of the rest of the cast by singing a silly song called "I Love Louisa," inviting their colleagues to join in. Although the children's performance of "The Sound of Music" for the Baroness begins formally, the Captain's spontaneous decision to join in, as well as the social function the song performs, suggests that it lies more towards the communal middle of the spectrum than the children's sad reprise.

Looking at how these categories work together, the most common combination for show musicals is realistic and formal. Examples include all of the so-called diegetic numbers of *The Band Wagon* (except for "I Love Louisa") and all of the numbers Sally performs at the Kit Kat Club in *Cabaret*. Non-show examples include the sad rehearsal of "The Sound of Music" and, in *The Music Man*, the women's dance club's "Grecian Urn Dance" and the children's band's performance of "Minuet in G." On the more fantastical side are numbers with implausibly

elaborate accompaniments but which are realistic in terms of the performers' skill-levels (e.g., "The Lonely Goatherd" from *The Sound of Music*). More fantastical are the visual effects in "I Only Have Eyes for You" (Reprise) and the miraculous improvement in skill as well as the spontaneous glamorization of the costumes in the final performance of "Seventy-Six Trombones" in *The Music Man*.

In folk and fairytale musicals, the most common combination is spontaneous and fantastical, a category that encompasses all the numbers of *My Fair Lady* (except the realistic-communal "Embassy Waltz"), *Oklahoma!* (except the fantastical-communal "Kansas City" and "The Farmer and the Cowman"), and *West Side Story* (except the fantastical-communal "Dance at the Gym" and "America").⁵³ Numbers that are spontaneous but entirely realistic are the least common. Even show musicals tend to rely on a degree of fantasy in their accompaniments and the tendency for shows to come together without rehearsals. Realistic-spontaneous numbers may be found in some early all-Black musicals, which aimed at a high degree of realism but played into the stereotype of the inherently musical African-American (e.g., "St Louis Blues" and "Goin' Home" from *Hallelujah* [1929]). With the increasing anxiety surrounding the realism of the musical, post-classical musicals featuring professional performers or keen amateurs are another good source for realistic-spontaneous numbers (e.g., "Is It Okay If I Call You Mine?" from *Fame* and "Next to Last Song" from *Dancer in the Dark* [2000]).

Realistic-communal numbers (e.g., "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" from *Cabaret*, the "Embassy Waltz" from *My Fair Lady*, and "Columbia, Gem of the Ocean" from *The Music Man*) are more common than realistic-spontaneous ones but fantastical-communal numbers are even more prevalent. Examples in which the accompaniment is the only fantastical component include Esther's attempts to lift her sister's spirits with "Have Yourself a Merry Little

Christmas” from *Meet Me in St. Louis* and the children’s attempts to cheer themselves up by reprising “My Favorite Things” in *The Sound of Music*. Fantastical-communal numbers are also frequently unrealistic with respect to the level of skill and unrehearsed coordination among the participants (e.g., “I Got Rhythm” from *An American in Paris*, “Kansas City” and “The Farmer and the Cowman” from *Oklahoma!*, and the reprise of “I’ll Cover You” and “Seasons of Love” at Angel’s funeral in *Rent* [2005]).

As we have seen with the children’s performance of “The Sound of Music” for the Baroness, a number’s status with regard to both axes can change. As part of the musical’s tendency to lift the everyday into a more ideal, utopian, or enchanted plane of existence, the most common shift is for a number to become progressively more fantastical. A formal example would be “Under the Bamboo Tree” from *Meet Me in St. Louis*, which begins with realistic piano accompaniment provided by Esther’s sister, but by time Esther and Tootie are performing the cakewalk with their hats and canes, the sounds of the piano have been replaced by those of a brass band. However, the shift from a realistic mode to a more fantastical one is more common in communal examples like “I Love Louisa” from *The Band Wagon* and “Do-Re-Mi” from *The Sound of Music*. The children’s progression from not knowing how to sing to singing in multiple parts makes the latter particularly miraculous.

Especially in folk musicals, which center around themes of community building, formal numbers have a tendency to turn into communal numbers. The Captain’s spontaneous participation in the first reprise of “The Sound of Music” is one such example. A larger-scale example would be the first instance of “Seventy-Six Trombones,” which begins as a solo performance by Harold and ends with the entire town singing and dancing down the street.

Multiple simultaneous categorizations are also possible in numbers combining multiple distinct songs or parts. In “Piano Lesson”/“If You Don’t Mind My Saying So” from *The Music Man*, Amaryllis’s piano playing is realistic and relatively formal while Marian’s conversation with her mother is fantastical and spontaneous. From the same film, the barbershop quartet’s performance of “Lida Rose” is moderately realistic and spontaneous while Marian’s “Will I Ever Tell You” is fantastical and spontaneous.

Abandoning the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction as the primary means of categorizing film-musical numbers would constitute a major revision to the scholarly discourse, but one that carries several key benefits. Regarding even fantastical numbers as diegetic supports more coherent understandings of the fictional worlds of film musicals and the role musical and dance numbers sometimes play in advancing the narratives of such films. It also allows for a wider range of interpretations of situations when characters share musical material, including those that are grounded in the characters’ actions and intentions. The proposed alternatives to the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction—the realistic-fantastical and formal-communal-spontaneous axes—provide more precise tools with which to compare film-musical numbers. Finally, bringing discourse on the film musical into a closer terminological alignment with the rest of cinema studies will facilitate more effective dialogues across film genres and may help in rendering the film musical less of a niche topic within cinema studies.

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Table 1: Form of “Why Can’t the English?” from *My Fair Lady*

Musical Form	Measures	Lyrics
A	8	Why can’t the English teach their children how to speak? This verbal class distinction by now should be antique.
A	8	If you spoke as she does, sir, instead of the way you do, Why you might be selling flowers too.
B	8	An Englishman’s way of speaking absolutely classifies him. The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him.
A	8	One common language I’m afraid we’ll never get. Oh, why can’t the English learn to—
Digression 1	19	Set a good example to people whose English is painful to your ears? The Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears. There even are places where English completely disappears. (spoken) In America, they haven’t used it for years!
A	8	Why can’t the English teach their children how to speak? Norwegians learn Norwegian; the Greeks are taught their Greek.
A	4	In France ev’ry Frenchman knows his language from “A” to “Zed”
Digression 2		(spoken) The French never care what they do, actually, as long as they pronounce it properly.
B	8	Arabians learn Arabian with the speed of summer lightning; The Hebrews learn it backwards, which is absolutely fight’ning.
A'	14	But use proper English, you’re regarded as a freak. Why can’t the English— Why can’t the English learn to speak?

¹ Scholars who employ “nondiegetic” include Stephen Banfield, *Jerome Kern* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 41, 168, 170, 206; Graham Wood, “Why Do They Start to Sing and Dance All of a Sudden? Examining the Film Musical,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 318, 320. Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 62–67, differentiates the “diegetic track” from the “music track” or “supra-diegetic music.” Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 67–68, contrasts diegetic numbers with “Musically Enhanced Reality Mode.” James Leve, *Kander and Ebb* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 161, contrasts “diegetic song” with “book song.”

² For criticisms of the diegetic-nondiegetic distinction with respect to non-musical films, see Alessandro Cecchi, “Diegetic Versus Nondiegetic: A Reconsideration of the Conceptual Opposition as a Contribution to the Theory of Audiovision,” *Worlds of Audiovision* (2010), www-5.unipv.it/wav/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&lang=en; Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 42–49; Annahid Kassabian, “The End of Diegesis as We Know It?” in *Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, ed. John Richardson, Claudia Gorbman, and Carol Vernallis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 89–106; David Neumeyer, “Source Music, Background Music, Fantasy and Reality in Early Sound Film,” *College Music Symposium* 37 (1997): 13–20; Ben Winters, *Music, Performance, and the Realities of Film: Shared Concert Experiences in Screen Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2014), chap. 7; Daniel Yacavone, “Spaces, Gaps, and Levels: From the Diegetic to the Aesthetic in Film Theory,” *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 6, no. 1 (2012): 21–37.

³ Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 67, 355n23; James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer, *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66; Michel Chion, *Film, a Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 474, 480–81; Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative and Film Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 22; Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), xiv; David Neumeyer, “Diegetic/Nondiegetic: A Theoretical Model,” *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 1 (2009), www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/musimoviimag.2.1.0026.

⁴ This song was originally composed by Arthur Schwartz (music) and Howard Dietz (lyrics) for *Here Comes the Bride* (London, 1930), and later used in their musical revue *The Band Wagon* (Broadway, 1931), which lent the film several of its numbers.

⁵ Performances by nameless characters who provide background music are not standardly regarded as “numbers.”

⁶ Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 66; Richard Dyer, *In the Space of a Song: The Uses of Song in Film* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 29, 60; Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*, 68, 196.

⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Book 3, 392d–394c.

⁸ Étienne Souriau, *L’Univers filmique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), 7: “Diégèse, Diégétique : tout ce qui appartient, ‘dans l’intelligibilité’ (comme dit M. Cohen-Séat) à l’histoire racontée, au monde supposé ou proposé par la fiction

du film.” Later, he defines *diégétique* as “un événement concernant les êtres de l’histoire, et constituant pour eux un déplacement dans l’espace mis en cause par cette histoire.” Ibid., 16. The English translations provided above are from Jean Mitry, *Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, trans. Christopher King (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 72.

⁹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 18, has attempted to clarify this matter. See also the two definitions of “diegesis” provided by Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 20.

¹⁰ Jean Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma. I: Les structures* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1963), 165; *Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, 72.

¹¹ Gérard Genette, “Discours du récit,” in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 72n1; *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 27n2.

¹² Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 341–4; Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Claude Doubinsky and Channa Newman (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 294–95. Quotation from Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 17; *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 13: “un univers plutôt qu’un enchaînement d’actions (histoire).”

¹³ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 1st ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 199; chapter on sound reprinted in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985): 181–99. Gorbman first used the terms diegetic and nondiegetic in connection with music in “Narrative Film Music,” *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 183–203, specifically 197.

¹⁴ Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 1st ed., 200. On the difference between diegetic-nondiegetic distinction and source-background distinction, refer to James Buhler, “Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (II): Analysing Interactions of Music and Film,” in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. K. J. Donnelly (New York: Continuum, 2001), 40.

¹⁵ David Neumeyer, “Performances in Early Hollywood Sound Film: Source Music, Background Music, and the Integrated Soundtrack,” *Contemporary Music Review* 19, no. 1 (2000), 41; Christian Metz, “Aural Objects,” in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, trans. Georgia Gurrieri (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 158.

¹⁶ Neumeyer, “Performances in Early Hollywood Films,” 49.

¹⁷ Neumeyer, “Source Music, Background Music,” 13–14.

¹⁸ On *Love Me Tonight*, see Lea Jacobs, “The Innovation of Re-Recording in Hollywood Studios,” *Film History* 24, no. 1 (2012), 23–24, especially Fig. 15. Despite the hype surrounding the live singing in *Les Misérables* (e.g., www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwgQjfg0hZw&feature=share&list=UUagplPOBQE4pDM75n7h6jPA), not all the singing was recorded with the visuals. Ian Sapiro, “Do You Hear the People Sing: (Ab)using Music and Technology in *Les Misérables* (2012),” paper presented at Music and the Moving Image, NYU Steinhardt, 27–29 May 2016; forthcoming in *Beyond the Barricade: Adapting ‘Les Misérables’ for the Cinema*.

¹⁹ For more on the backstage or show musical, refer to Altman, *The American Film Musical*, chap. 7.

²⁰ Robynn Stilwell, “The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic,” in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 188.

²¹ Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 67; Buhler, Neumeyer, Deemer, *Hearing the Movies*, 82–83; Guido Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film: Steps across the Border* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), 138.

²² Jane Feuer, “The International Art Musical: Defining and Periodising Post-1980s Musicals,” in *The Sound of Musicals*, ed. Steven Cohan (London: BFI, 2010), 58.

²³ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁴ Scott McMillin, *The Musical as Drama* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 104. McMillin is commenting on the stage musical but the film contains a similar exchange.

²⁵ Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 67; Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film*, chap. 3; Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*, 67–68; Leve, *Kander and Ebb*, 161; McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 112.

²⁶ Jeff Smith, “Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music,” *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 1 (2009), www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/musimoviimag.2.1.0001.

²⁷ Edward Lowry, *The Filmology Movement and Film Study in France* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982), 84.

²⁸ John Mueller, “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,” *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1 (1984), 28–30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29; McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 8.

³⁰ Mueller, “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,” 33–35.

³¹ This argument has gained traction in opera studies through Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 119, who states that the “music is not produced by or within the stage-world, but emanates from other loci as secret commentaries for our ears alone.” For a critique of Abbate’s argument, see Nina Penner, “Opera Singing and Fictional Truth,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71, no. 1 (2013): 81–90.

³² Raymond Knapp and Mitchell Morris, “The Filmed Musical,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 143.

³³ Sebastian Kirschner and Michael Tomasello, “Joint Music Making Promotes Prosocial Behavior in 4-Year-Old Children,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 31, no. 5 (2010): 354–64; Gunter Kreutz, “Does Singing Facilitate Social Bonding?” *Music & Medicine* 6, no. 2 (2014): 51–60; Eiluned Pearce, Jacques Launay, and Robin I. M. Dunbar, “The Ice-Breaker Effect: Singing Mediates Fast Social Bonding,” *Royal Society Open Science* 2, no. 10 (2015).

³⁴ Neumeyer, “Performances in Early Hollywood Sound Film,” 46.

³⁵ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 104.

³⁶ Shaw had no intention to imply that Eliza and Higgins would eventually marry, though many directors have. In response, Shaw wrote a postscript outlining his preferred future for Eliza, involving marriage to Freddy. First printed in George Bernard Shaw, *Androcles and the Lion; Overruled; Pygmalion* (New York: Brentano’s, 1916), 209–24.

³⁷ Refer to Altman’s discussion of the “personality dissolve” in *The American Film Musical*, 80–89. What Altman fails to note is how the woman usually sacrifices more than the man. In *Funny Face* (1957), Audrey Hepburn’s character must abandon her bookish apparel for the *haute couture* stylizings of her fashion-photographer lover (Fred Astaire) but he is not required to read philosophy.

³⁸ A similar observation is made by Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*, 289: “The real question of the show is ... not whether Eliza will learn to speak properly ... but whether Higgins will learn to ‘sing.’”

³⁹ The song is reprised in both the major (“I can see her now”) and minor mode (“In a year or so”). Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 196–200; Geoffrey Holden Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 237–38; McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 67–68.

⁴⁰ The stage musical does not call for Higgins to reappear. Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, in *American Musicals, 1950–1969: The Complete Books & Lyrics of Eight Broadway Classics*, ed. Laurence Maslon (New York: Library of America, 2014), 196–98.

⁴¹ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 64–66.

⁴² Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*, 293. He describes the song as “a cross between the ranting portions of ‘An Ordinary Man’ and Eliza’s ‘I Could Have Danced All Night.’” Ibid., 292.

⁴³ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 68.

⁴⁴ Gregory Currie, *Narratives and Narrators: A Philosophy of Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 49.

⁴⁵ Paul Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 95.

⁴⁶ Others who regard the accompaniment as part of the fictional world include C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 295; Heather Laing, “Emotion by Numbers: Music, Song and the Musical,” in *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, ed. Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell (Exeter: Intellect, 2000), 8–9; Ben Winters, “The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative,” *Music & Letters* 91, no. 2 (2010), 229.

⁴⁷ I say “possible” on account of divergent conceptions of the “diegesis” in film. If it is understood as comprising only intersubjectively accessible properties of the fictional world then dreams, imaginings, and hallucinations would be nondiegetic. But if one understands it as the totality of facts about the story, dreams and so on should be regarded as diegetic but simply subjectively inflected or saturated. On these terms, see George M. Wilson, *Seeing Fictions in Film: The Epistemology of Movies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 149–54.

⁴⁸ Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 145.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁰ Many scholars and critics have doubted that highly realistic films like *Cabaret* are in fact musicals: Altman, *The America Film Musical*, 71; Randy Clark, “Bending the Genre: The Stage and Screen Versions of *Cabaret*,” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1991), 53; Roger Greenspun, Review of *Cabaret*, *New York Times*, February 14, 1972, www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=EE05E7DE1738B52CA7494CC2B6799E8C6896; Mueller, “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,” 28; Rubin, *Showstoppers*, 36–37, 183; David Rooney and Jonathan Bing, “Can

Hollywood Carry a Tune?” *Variety*, March 10, 2003, 51; Martin Rubin, “Busby Berkeley and the Backstage Musical,” in *Hollywood Musicals, the Film Reader*, ed. Steven Cohan (London: Routledge, 2002), 57; “Cabaret,” *Variety*, February 16, 1972, 18. Although recognizing that a degree of fantasy is a standard feature of the musical, I do not see it as a necessary one.

⁵¹ Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), chap. 4; Altman, *The American Film Musical*, chap. 4. Richard Dyer, “Entertainment as Utopia,” in *Hollywood Musicals, the Film Reader*, ed. Steven Cohan (London: Routledge, 2002), 23, 26, also observes that the musical’s utopian sensibility is concentrated in its numbers.

⁵² Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 62–74, has coined the term “audio dissolve” to describe this phenomenon.

⁵³ On folk and fairy tale musicals, refer to *ibid.*, chaps 7 and 8.