MUSICALS

An Escape From Reality
What is a Musical?

- a stage, television, or film production utilizing popular-style songs (dialogue optional) to either tell a story or showcase the talents of the writers and/or performers
- song and dance numbers must rupture the narrative, they cannot be in the background while the narrative continues
Musicals

- The stories of all musicals have the characters searching for love, success, wealth, and/or popularity. The characters engage in musical numbers and dance routines.
- Musicals deal with intimate social settings, codes of community, and family and emotional truth.
Musicals

- Musicals contain multiple song and dance routines that erupt from the narrative and seem "unrealistic."
- The songs can be original, or can be adapted into the musical.
Musicals are the most unbelievable genre;
saturated colors, exaggerated costumes,
fantastic sets
fantasy world
Musicals first became popular when talkies were created. Some of the first talkies included musical numbers and dance routines. An example being "The Jazz Singer" created by Warner Brothers in 1927.
The 1930s were considered the "Golden Age of the Musical." This was during the Great Depression. Audiences found a sudden sense of liberation and celebration in a vocal scene in these films.
Types of Musicals

- Book Musical
- Operetta
- All-Sung Musicals
- Backstage Musicals
- Integrated and Non-integrated
- All-Star Revue
a musical play where songs and dances are fully integrated into a story with serious, dramatic goals that evoke emotion
contain spoken and sung dialogue
Operettas

- Light Operas with Dialogue
- Precursor of the modern day "musical"
- Many of the first musicals created were Operettas
- These films looked like photographed stage plays
- Often used classically trained Opera singers rather than actors who sing
Backstage Musicals

- Backstage musicals were the most popular during the Great Depression.
- They use a song and dance number as a major moment in the film.
- Backstage musicals usually follow a lead female role in her journey to find her career and become a star.
- Male characters often dominate as directors or leaders of the play in the film.
The first genuine backstage musical film was "The Broadway Melody" created in 1929. It was also the first musical and first sound film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture.
"All talking, all singing, all dancing"
- included specialty or vaudeville acts, comedy sketches, musical numbers, and short dramas
Non-integrated Musical

- Non-integrated musicals are films in which the musical numbers are not blended into the narrative.
- Seen as highly stylized and exotic
- Musical numbers have no relation to the story
- Audiences are often forced into watching the song and dance routines
Integrated Musical

- Musicals in which the storyline gives the characters a good reason to transition into a musical number.
- The musical numbers often move the plot forward by expressing the characters feelings, wishes, or future actions.
- Transitions from dialogue to routines are smooth.
History of Musicals

Screen 1927-1930
- Hollywood Learns To Sing
- Sound = Panic!

Screen 1930s
- I: "Hip, Hooray and Ballyhoo"
- II: Busby Berkeley
- III: Astaire & Rogers
- IV: Major Studio Studios
- V: More MGM Gems

Screen 1940s
- I: Warners, Paramount
- II: Universal, Columbia & Fox
- III: MGM Reigns Supreme

Screen 1950s
- I: OK Efforts and Lesser Gems
- II: MGM's Last Roar
- III: Three Classics

Screen 1960s
- A Spoonful of Sugar
- Broadway Melodies

Screen 1970s
- Hopelessly Devoted

Screen 1980s
- Crazy World

Screen 1990s
- A Whole New World

Screen 2000s
- A New Century
Films like *Coal Miner's Daughter*, depicting the lives of famous performers. - Show people
Films like *42nd St.* that show the casting, rehearsal and staged production numbers of a show are backstage musicals.

The transition between narrative and spectacle is not always clear to the audience.
Unlike the classic Hollywood style, props in musicals are not usually just set design, they can be objects to be used in musical performances.
False: There is usually no "audience" in a musical number. Other characters act like nothing is happening. - Sometimes people have audiences that are watching the musical numbers
Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers musicals most resemble screwball comedy.

Arthur Freed is best known for Producing musicals.

*Moulin Rouge, The Love Parade, and The Merry Widow* are all operettas.

Common techniques used to transition from narrative to musical number: changing from color to black-and-white and changing from noise to music
test questions

Most musicals have a \textit{fantasy} setting.

Classic realist narration: all of the above can be present - aliens, cityscapes, music.

Classical definition of a musical: Chicago, not the bodyguard, 8 mile, or glitter.

\textit{8 Mile} a film with music, but \textit{not} a musical - In a musical, the musical numbers rupture the narrative just for the song.

Dialogue in a musical operates in which dramatic register - \textit{Narrative}.

A musical sub-genre that eliminates most or all narrative by stringing together unrelated musical numbers - \textit{Book Musical}.
1940s

The War and Post-War Years
The Beginnings of Film Noir
1940s

- lots of war propaganda
- *Casablanca*
- *Citizen Kane*
- Mostly B&W films
- birth of film noir
- gangster revival
- escapist, nostalgic
- Controversial films: *Forever Amber*, *Mom and Dad*, *Joan of Arc*
1940s

- Golden Age of Disney Feature Film Animation: Dumbo, Pinocchio, Fantasia, Bambi.
1940s

- **Musicals popular**
  - *Thrill of a Romance (1945)* with aquatic star Esther Williams
  - *Anchors Aweigh (1945)*, with Frank Sinatra's *first* major screen appearance and featuring Gene Kelly's dance with an animated mouse
  - *The Harvey Girls (1945)*, a musical set in a 19th century Fred Harvey Restaurant with Angela Lansbury and Judy Garland as stars, and with an Oscar-winning song: "Atcheson, Topeka and the Santa Fe"
  - *State Fair (1945)*
  - *The Dolly Sisters (1945)*
  - *Up in Arms (1945)*

- **Hitchcock**
1940s

House of Representatives' Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

Many obstacles at the end of the decade:

- The coming of television forcing potential moviegoers to remain at home
- Blacklisting and McCarthyism
- A 1945 studio labor union strike that raised salaries 25% for studio employees
- A short-lived 75% import duty, from 1947-1948, that restricted the import of all US films into the UK
- The gradual decline of theatre-attending audiences
- Inflation that raised film production costs
- Anti-trust rulings by the US government against the studios
- Block-booking of films was declared illegal and studios were forced to divest themselves of their studio-owned theatre chains by the Paramount Decrees (an action of the US Justice Department and an anti-monopoly decision of the US Supreme Court in 1948 against the Big Five major film studios and three minor studios). The court's anti-trust decision in U.S. vs. Paramount mandated that the production and exhibition functions of the film industry had to be