

## THE BANDWAGON & SINGING IN THE RAIN

This essay will analyze *The Bandwagon* and *Singin' in the Rain* through a dance perspective in relation to mise en scene. The focus shall be spent on comparing the dance performances and how the use of mise en scene changes the dance choreography in terms of difficulty and/or simplicity. 24 pages long.

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*The Bandwagon* and *Singin' in the Rain* provided two film examples of how dance choreography interacted with the mise en scene, through the use of props, to increase or decrease the level of difficulty. In addition to mise en scene, the difficulty of dance choreography also varied in relation to the actor's dance abilities. In light of this, *The Bandwagon* and *Singin' in the Rain* shall be analyzed through a dance perspective in relation to mise en scene.

This paper will focus on comparing the dance performances of *The Bandwagon* and *Singin' in the Rain* and will attempt to explain why and how the use of mise en scene changes the dance choreography in terms of difficulty and/or simplicity. In order to support this argument most dance sequences from both films will be analyzed, thus changing the nature of your project's exercise to give this topic more depth and support, as opposed comparing just two sequences. Many devices in filmic language such as light, color, editing, camera work, cinematography, etc do not change the choreography, as will be discussed momentarily. The nature of the topic requires that many scenes be analyzed in order to support the claims in respect to mise en scene.

In order to assess the role of mise en scene in relation to dance, some preliminaries are necessary to put the entire film into perspective. The first perspective is the story of these films which both illustrate the passing of an era. *The Bandwagon* portrays a dancer who has lost his popularity and *Singin' in the Rain* portrays a silent cinema which has also lost its popularity. In essence both of these films illustrate a man on one hand and an industry on the other, which struggle to hold on to their roots as they try to adapt to modernity. Therefore the stories of both these

films are identical and will not constitute an identifying factor as to why dance styles varied.

Another important aspect to consider are the major actors in relation to their dancing abilities, which vary tremendously, and will invariably play a role in the staging, use of props, and mise en scene of choreography for both of these films.

The Bandwagon featured Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Jack Buchanan, and Oscar Levant. Fred Astaire, considered the greatest dancer in history, was 54 and aging, not a physically strong dancer, and had expertise in ballroom, ballet, and tap. Cyd Charisse was in her prime, 25, was a physically strong dancer, and was experienced in ballet and jazz with no tap dance abilities. Jack Buchanan was also in his early fifties, had no agility as a dancer, and was principally an actor/singer. Nanette Fabray was youthful and could handle a bit of dance but was principally a comedian. Oscar Levant was a talented piano player with comedic abilities but had no dance abilities.

Singin' in the Rain featured Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Cyd Charisse, and Debbie Reynolds. Gene Kelly, although 40, was still in great form, was a very physically strong dancer, principally a jazz and tap dancer with light abilities in ballet, and acrobatics. Debbie Reynolds was at her prime in her early 20s but had very little dance experience prior to the making of the film. Cyd Charisse was in her prime at about 25 years old and was a physically strong dancer, principally a ballet and jazz, but no tap-dancing abilities. Donald O'Connor was also a physically strong dancer, and probably more agile than Kelly, with jazz and tap dance abilities.

The above facts will dictate the mise en scene of all dance numbers in The Bandwagon and Singin' in the Rain because ultimately the main actors' abilities in dance will dictate the difficulty of the choreographies, which appear in both films. The mise en scene, by clever use of props, will often be used to hide the main character's individual dance weaknesses or strengths in relation to each other. In essence the various choreographies, with the help of mise en scene, will illustrate their ability to make everybody look equally impressive in the dance numbers. The equalizing factor in the way characters are illustrated in these dance numbers, I will argue is mise en scene, and more particularly the use of props. Mise en scene is perhaps the most important varying element to consider. The story, and color of the films, for example, will not change the dance number's complexity or energy. The story and color will only change the style, which will vary according to the context and subject of the film whereas color will only affect the 'pictorial' look of the film. Perhaps, the only other two filmic devices, which can alter dance's complexity and

staging, are camera movement and editing. The camera's ability to capture movement can also dictate the way in which dance is choreographed and staged. However the camera, with exception to Busby Berkley, was almost always static and shot the body from head to toe as Fred Astaire taught it. Therefore, and especially in *The Bandwagon* and *Singin' in the Rain*, the camera movement will not constitute an important element when analyzing dance in relation to mise en scene. Editing, for its part, can also affect the way choreography is staged and choreographed, but overwhelming evidence from the roughly 1300 hundred musicals, which have been made to date, illustrates that 95% of film makers have opted for very little editing to avoid disturbing dance's continuity. Therefore editing will also be discarded as providing insight on the relationship of dance choreography on film. In sum the only remaining element, which has an ability to change dance choreography, increasing its difficulty or simplicity, is mise en scene.

*The Bandwagon*, which features Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Oscar Levant, Jack Buchanan and Nanette Fabray often substituted sophisticated dance numbers with comedic elements. This served the purpose of equalizing the character's varying dance levels. However one cannot take credit away from comedic dance numbers which can, in many ways, be just as impressive. In terms of *The Bandwagon*, comedic elements usually come to life by way of mise en scene and extensive use of props. In addition the use of props can also considerably shorten the amount of actual dance choreography that is needed to fill the length of the song. In addition props will also substitute dance steps and replace them with more singing and mise en scene. In essence, the use of props mixed with comedy also helped disguise the aging performers in relation to the youthful performers. The use of props and comedy will serve, as distraction while the audience is entertained and captivated. In instances such as these the age factor quickly dissolves. That's not to say that Astaire was a legend and his grace was enough to captivate the audience.

*Singin' in the Rain*, on the other hand, also mixed props and comedy but did not have to contend with the age factor as most of it's stars, most notably Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Cyd Charisse, and Debbie Reynolds were youthful and energetic. *Singin' in the Rain* had another problem and it was the integration of Debbie Reynolds, who had very little dance experience prior to *Singin' in the Rain*, into sophisticated dance routines. Therefore dance numbers made use of props to sideline Reynolds as O'Connor and Kelly did most of the dancing. Cyd Charisse was not a major concern because she only appeared in the last ten minute finally. Therefore most male/female duets had to be danced by Debbie Reynolds, which lead to some clever uses of mise en scene, as will be discussed momentarily.

Make Em Laugh and That's Entertainment are perfect examples of choreographies, which were completely dictated by the use of props. In addition to props, the mise en scene in these choreographies moved and fulfilled a dancer's role. That's Entertainment used a backstage set, which was integrated into the dance number. Four of the major characters, with varying levels of dance abilities, were included in the dance number, which essentially dictated the dance routine's level of difficulty. Consequently the dance steps were composed of a walk which travels back and fourth and sideways. In addition the mise en scene which was composed of moving set parts, were also choreographed into the number. The opening lyrics in That's Entertainment were sung sitting down in which individuals sang their different parts while comically acting them out. When the instrumental part of the song began, where most of the dance was typically done, Oscar Levant, who has no dancing abilities, completely pulls out of the action while the others do simple 4 count time steps. Most of Levant's dancing was composed of, moving sets into and out of, the camera's range as he hid behind them. In addition when all four characters strike a pose Levant simply stood at the bottom while the more physically agile characters climbed onto the top. Furthermore the extensive use of props, including the moving sets and the ladder, served to distract the audience from the fact that there was very little dance in this number. In fact there was so much movement, other then actual dance, that most people interpreted the general movement within the scene, as dance. Oscar Levant essentially struck poses while the others did the remainder of the dancing. In essence the most noticeable dance sequence occurred at the end when the four characters walked side by side as they sang their lines. That's Entertainment provided an example of how a dance number could elicit a lot of dance while it was ironically composed of very little dance. In essence this number illustrated a fine line between choreography, arrangement of dance steps, and the actual dance steps themselves. That's Entertainment illustrated how mise en scene can completely take over the movement in a dance number as it simultaneously serves the purpose of providing a vehicle which equalizes the varying levels of dance, making all the characters look equally as good.

Make Em Laugh, on the other hand, uses all of the aforementioned, dance steps, choreography, props, and moving sets, which composed a classic specialty act. O'Connor, in what is almost impossible to describe, has conceived a dance number, which exemplified the energy of a hundred people. The hand held props, such as the hat and doll were choreographed to the music. The hat was flipped back and forth on cue as well as the doll, which was thrown into the air on accents in the music. When movements, involving props, were cued to the music, the subtle effect conditioned the audience to see the movements without realizing the relationship between the prop movement and the music. When the doll is tossed up into the air the action is perceived as being random when in fact the audience does not realize that the reason why the action looks good is because it is choreographed with the music.

Make Em Laugh also used set workers, who carried wood and a sofa, and integrated them into the choreography. Not only were they integrated, they had to be choreographed because they had to be at a certain place, at a certain time in the music to enable O'Connor to hit or duck under the obstacle on the accent in the music. They had to use people who were aware of music, timing and spacing and my best guess is that they used dancers to carry the obstacles into the choreographed scene.

In addition O'Connor demonstrated his acrobatic abilities as he ran up the walls and subtly involved the mise en scene in doing so. His slapstick falls illustrated his youth and exuberance, something that Astaire for example could not have done in his dancing career. Along with his slap stick falls, he also used comical facial gestures both in the beginning and at the end when he ran up against a brick wall.

In essence the exact same elements were used in both, That's Entertainment and Make Em Laugh and were just as successfully used in their respective context. In essence the means, which made the dance numbers successful as discussed above, were radically different but the end result was the same. The use of mise en scene responded to the needs of various dance levels, including four characters with dance experience ranging from none to perfection, and one very exuberant youthful dancer, whose end result created two very different dance numbers with the same degree of effectiveness. Mise en scene in the Hollywood musicals assured that all the actor's various dance abilities were exploited efficiently to make everybody and anybody look good with anyone.

A Shine on your Shoes was an example of a number where Astaire had a lot of moving mise en scene and props but makes no use of it because he choreographed his movements around the props. This dance number provides an example of a how a talented solo dance performance can render the mise en scene useless. Useless in the sense that Astaire could perform without the need to hide a weakness as was the case in That's Entertainment, where the choreography was toned down to accommodate the other characters. In addition the mise en scene uselessness, in terms of dance, was illustrated by the simple fact that choreographed could be done in an empty room whereas That's Entertainment, with its elaborate use of mise en scene, could not. The secret in the effectiveness of this number, other than mise en scene relates to an ensemble. The shoe shiner provided a dance component by dancing with his cleaning materials while Astaire sang, which culminated in a typical song and dance number. Then, while Astaire and the shoe shiner sang and danced, the scene was cluttered with furniture and people that seemed to exist

independently of Astaire's choreography. The various movements that converged with Astaire's choreography, created a choreographed ensemble.

At a completely opposite spectrum Gene Kelly's Singing in the Rain had used a mise en scene that was empty of people or props and only provided choreography of Kelly's dancing. This number is contrasted to A shine on your Shoes because it presents a mise en scene, which is left idol, meaning in the background and void of all life, as dance occurs in the fore ground. Kelly used an umbrella, as his principle prop, that could be compared to as a dance partner because it was exquisitely involved in Kelly's choreography, similar to Astaire's dance partner, but with much greater importance. The only two occasions when mise en scene was used, occurred when Kelly ran his umbrella against the building creating sounds and secondly when Kelly climbed onto the lamppost. Other than these notable exceptions the mise en scene was inactive in this particular dance number.

Choreography in both Singing in the Rain and A shine on your Shoes, have provided examples of mise en scene when it is overtly present as in A Shine on your Shoes, and when it is present not used as in Singin' in the Rain, in relation to the choreography. These examples demonstrated a mise en scene, which was not used, while being cluttered at one end and empty on the other but nonetheless both dancers, Astaire and Kelly look equally as good and employ different dance modes and styles, to suit their purposes.

Both of Cyd Charisse's numbers in The Bandwagon, namely the ballet sequence and New sun in the Sky presented a mise en scene that was empty and void of all distractions, other than male dancers who literally stand in one position and catch Charisse as she leaps through the air. However the lack of any mise en scene, other than painted backdrops, props or life other than dance illustrated Charisse's strong dance technique which allowed her to fill the stage. In fact, stylistically, Cyd Charisse provided the strongest of "pure dance performances" in both, The Bandwagon and Singin' in the Rain. Astaire and Kelly were exceptional entertainers who could sing, act, and dance effectively, however they were not dancers in the strict ballet sense. This being said dance on its own in the intellectual modern, classical ballet, of contemporary sense has never made it to the mainstream and probably never will. It was and always will be the combination of acting, dancing, and singing, which appeal to mainstream audiences. One can be strictly poetic with dance as is the case with ballet, modern, and contemporary, but when dance's entertainment value is neglected; its mainstream success is close to impossible. Show business as a whole can survive without/either singing, music, dance, and acting, but the individual parts cannot. Therefore other than male dancers, who were present on the stage, Cyd Charisse was in no need of distractions, props, or a clutter of movement because

her pure dance abilities and presence, not to mention her sex appeal, were enough to grace the stage.

The strong duets, whose mise en scene and dance styles also varied greatly according to circumstances, were *Moses*, I guess I'll have to change my plan, *You were meant for me*, *Fit as a Fiddle*, and *Dancing in the dark*. These four dance numbers will demonstrate not only varying mise en scenes, but will also varying levels of dance ability which influenced staging and choreography.

Kelly's *You were meant for me* posed a problem for him because Debbie Reynolds had very little dance experience, which limited the level of difficulty in the choreography. Nonetheless the plot called for a duet between Reynolds and Kelly, and it had to look good regardless of Reynolds' experience. Therefore Reynolds' lack of dance experience was substituted by the manipulation of mise en scene. The number began with an interlude, during which Kelly revealed the mise en scene to us as he literally constructed the mise en scene piece by piece revealing Hollywood's capabilities in the world of make belief. Kelly turned the red spotlight on the music's cue, the breeze fan and, as the music temperament increased, Reynolds climbed the ladder physically illustrating the music's elevation. Traditionally the entrance to such a scene would have included a lift or traveling-step as is the case when Kelly enters the ballroom and waltzes with various woman in *Singing in the Rain's* finally, *Broadway Ballet*. However Reynolds' lack of dance experience was substituted by an artificial lift as she steadily climbed to the top of the ladder. He sang as she watched which then propelled them into a light dance where they polka around in a circle, similar to *For Me and my Gal* as Kelly does with Judy Garland. This short sequence of a circular dance step illustrated Reynolds' tension because a fine eye can detect this just by analyzing her posture in the sequence. This choreography perfectly illustrated the reason why clever uses of mise en scene had to be devised in order to hide these imperfections in these two films and many others. Had Kelly done a similar number with Cyd Charisse, for example, the mise en scene could have been much simpler and the number would have been longer.

In contrast *Dancing in the Dark* perfectly illustrates what difference, a capable dancer like Cyd Charisse, would have made in the use of mise en scene. The park, which Astaire and Charisse walked through and eventually danced in, provided a mise en scene, which was straightforward and easy to understand. In contrast to Kelly's illustration of illusion Astaire and Charisse seemed to indulge into deep fantasy, looking gazed or in trans-like mood, as they walked through the park. Nobody seemed to exist as their gazed look made us wonder whether they realized they were together. Astaire and Charisse walked through the crowd, on rhythm, which suggested that they heard the musicians but totally disregarded the people

around them. They arrived to their designated position where they danced using the mise en scene's backdrop, which was motionless with nothing or nobody in sight to disturb them. When Astaire and Charisse begin their dance, life begins, while life everywhere else stops. Everything around them remains static, no wind, no people, practically no movement in the camera, and almost no editing. Dancing in the Dark provided a mise en scene that is lifeless when dance abilities are present, as opposed to the lack of dance abilities in You were Meant for Me where the mise en scene actively participated. The only instance where mise en scene participated, in a subtle way, in Dancing in the Dark, was during lifts. When Charisse did an exuberant lift she steps onto a park bench giving the audience that illusion of being held up by Astaire. However the strength required doing such a task may have opened the way to the use of the park bench which consequently constitutes a part of mise en scene. This doesn't demean Fred Astaire at all but rather, illustrated the ingenuity of mise en scene's ability to actively participate in choreography. Fred Astaire was not a physical dancer nor did he try to be. Astaire was something better; class, perfection, execution, personified.

Fit as a Fiddle and Moses presented variations of tap dancing, which Astaire did not try to emulate. Astaire left it up to Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor and stuck to his style for more than 25 years on Broadway and 30 years on film.

Fit as a Fiddle combined Russian type-dance steps with some simple tap dance and jazz. Although they didn't need mise en scene to hide flaws or add to their dancing abilities the use mise en scene increased the difficulty of the dance numbers. They danced while they pretended to be playing violins, which increased the level of difficulty because you must hold on to the object for the duration of the dance, which doubles the likelihood of error. The difficulty, increased because there were few cuts and generally very little editing which forced dance numbers like this, to be shot in a couple of takes. This meant that many sequences despite the level of difficulty, were done in one take, therefore perfection was essential. However in addition to using a violin Kelly and O'Connor travel extensively from one side of the stage to another.

Similarly Moses also made use of Kelly and O'Connor's strength, and agility. However contrary to Fit as a Fiddle, Moses featured very strong tap dancing. The dance number made use of comedy but does not, in any way, add or take away from the difficulty of the dance number. The mise en scene in this number used a desk, window shades and a schoolteacher for comedic purposes. Their dance steps were so intense in their level of difficulty that comedic aspects were added to provide depth in true vaudeville tradition. The exuberance of the dance steps was personified by Kelly and O'Connor's youth.



However in direct contrast to both *Fit as a Fiddle* and *Moses*, *I love Louisa* and *Triplets* provided instances where youth and exuberance were not in the forefront but rather featured the *mise en scene's* props and comedic elements to cater to dance abilities. In essence this discussion was often contrasting musical moments focusing on how dance changed from one number to another.

In *I love Louisa*, the musical moment was composed of a shot filmed within a room, filled to capacity which was literally cluttering the image. In fact the number had no dancing other than a short polka around the room and featured Astaire's singing in a heavy accent as a comical aspect. Therefore *I Love Louisa* provided another instance where a technically difficult dance was not required to illustrate a musical moment. However it was more conceivable that such a number could be devised for Astaire, who was in his fifties, whereas Kelly and O'Connor's youth, were made useful to illustrate youthful dancing abilities. One must remember that Astaire's class in the early fifties may not have appealed to the youth who embraced the up and coming rock & roll craze and therefore energetic numbers were very much needed to keep this younger crowd interested in the Hollywood musical.

Similarly *Triplets* provided a brilliant choreography of voices, which used *mise en scene* as a comedic element, along with some simple choreography, using hand gestures and dance steps which were performed on their knees. *Triplets* again involved a lot of elements, which allowed the dance element to be simplified. Nanette Fabray, Jack Buchanan, and Fred Astaire used a formula, which enabled everybody to look equally as good, which included keeping Astaire off of his legs, sitting him down on a high chair, and making him dance on his knees. This number was effective because its comedic element was absurd enough, in the same way that a *Marx Brother* skid would be, to produce a positive response from the audience. Again the *mise en scene*, through the use of props such as costumes and props, (high chairs), presented a situation where dance was omitted which allowing each of the actors to look equally as good.

*Good Morning* included a lot of sections where the choreography was watered down or excluded Reynolds altogether. For instance Reynolds climbed onto a pedestal and sang while Kelly and O'Connor danced around her. In addition as the music's intensity rose the dancers simply climbed the fireplace rather than dancing, which eliminated potentially difficult dance steps for Reynolds. By using the fireplace this was avoided allowing Reynolds to participate in a simplified choreography. Then they used jackets in a playful manner, which again, Reynolds could handle. They also used the bar, as one would use in a ballet class, as they simulated bar exercises. Finally they fell into the sofa for the finally in the number.

The above description only adds to the fact that mise en scene's clever use of props can alter the final presentation of choreography. However I insist that mise en scene is very much a vehicle for equalizing the dance abilities of the various actors involved.

Although the dancing was simple, the use of mise en scene, involving costumes, the use of a cane, and both Astaire and Buchanan's high level of class, I guess I'll have to change my plans demonstrated that simple can be just as effective as Good morning's exhilarating difficulty. I guess I'll have to change my plans was a show of class composed of a series of poses designed to put class in the forefront, as opposed choreography. Again the mise en scene was inactive and was effectively replaced by class, in this particular instance. The dancer's abilities, particularly that Jack Buchanan, dictated the difficulty of the choreography. His limited dance ability greatly simplified the dance number, focussing on something-other than dance, by a combination of dance and class. I guess I'll have to change my plans and Good Mornin' represented the best examples of mise en scene's involvement with the goal of hiding some of the character's weaknesses. This being said, the analysis was provided to illustrate the mise en scene's role in the choreography as opposed to demeaning individual performers.

Finally this discussion ends with the comparison of both finallies from The Bandwagon and Singin' in the Rain, consisting of a combination of all that's been said involving mise en scene and dance. The discussion shall illustrate various components of film language particularly because these final scenes have a life of their own. They are mini films, which contain a ten-minute plot, which opens, develops, and is entirely resolved by the end of the choreography.

Singing in the Rain's Broadway Melody did not promote the violence that The Girl Hunt promoted. In fact the only sign of violence is the valor involved in Charisse's seductive temptation which Kelly was denied.

The use of mise en scene in Broadway Melody was apparent from the start because the neon lights combined with the camera's long shot and provided depth in field illustrating Broadway's intensity; "a thousand hearts beat quicker there". The long shot which transformed itself into a panoramic shot helped the mise en scene by adding grandeur to the scene as hundreds of people came running out to cheer and dance. However the long shots provided an illustration of grandeur in terms of both the costumes and mise en scene, but did not have any affect on the dance choreography per say.

The mise en scene then went straight to work as it combined the presentation of people's poses which represented work occupations, and fashions of the time, while Kelly stumbled in the foreground as he searched for work. The rolling carpet added a complexity in the dance movement because people were rhythmically moving without actually moving. In addition there were actually two carpets, with a space between them where the man in the top hat and ties emulated the carpet where there was none. In this process, the mise en scene created an ensemble of movement, which involved very little dancing. In instances such as these the music was responsible for creating an illusion of dance by making itself so apparent in the absence of dance.

The mise en scene in the Broadway Melody did not lend itself to dance as apparently as in other numbers discussed. The mise en scene was replaced by an abundance of people. The next scene demonstrated this by placing Kelly in the midst of a performance on stage with an audience placed right in front of him. A spectacle of rhythm arose because Kelly danced with people in the forefront, which emulated an audience, breaking the barrier between the audience and performer. In essence the scene was depicting the true vaudeville tradition in what Al Jolson believed to be the interaction between the performer and audience.

The plot thickened with the powerful dance performance by a seductive Charisse in the scene immediately following. She was stylistically more pleasing and suited to perform that raunchy blues number than Kelly was, which left Kelly standing idol for much of the number. The mise en scene was inactive as figures were used to fill the space and its only main contribution was the constant changes in its sets, which added more depth and displacement of time to the plot development. We witnessed the change in five sets, which illustrated Kelly's successful growth from rags to riches, ending in his second meeting with Charisse, which offered another dance sequence where Kelly is disadvantaged by Charisse's ballet performance.

The dance developed as a dream sequence, which involved the use of a long veil, which, one could argue, served as a silent dance partner to both Kelly and Charisse. The choreography appeared to be staged around the veil, which guided most of their movements in the dance. The veil represented the distance between Kelly and Charisse within the plot and story of Broadway Melody. One could also argue that the veil also represented the contrast in their dance styles in real life. The dance movements were composed of ballet as Charisse demonstrates by walking on the points of her shoes. Kelly was clearly at a disadvantage because his training was composed of tap dance and jazz. Therefore the number, from a dancer's point of view illustrated Charisse's clear dominance in the dancing as Kelly offered a

secondary role in this sequence. However as already mentioned Kelly, as was Astaire, was trained to offer a performance which married song, dance, and acting, a formula that was instrumental in the success of the musical. Charisse offered stronger dance performances but was not an all round entertainer.

Stylistically the Broadway Melody illustrated dance in its purest of forms pitting pure ballet against vaudeville tradition. The powerful performances of both Kelly and Charisse in their respective styles rendered the mise en scene almost useless in terms of actively participating in dance choreography. However hundreds of people were often used to create an ensemble of movement in which people were often providing movement in the background. Mise en scene illustrated itself in various forms and lent itself to the capabilities of individual dancers by using devices that equalized performances by adding and reducing difficulty to one's performance.

The Girl Hunt presented the audience with an image of Fred Astaire, which involved violence and a dance style that resembled a gangster movie much more than a typical Astaire routine. The exuberance, which was made apparent in many scenes was quiet often danced by youthful dancers as illustrated in this finally and were rarely danced by Astaire himself. The finally in essence combined a very odd mix of a rock & roll rebellious culture with that of Hollywood's golden era represented by Astaire. The peculiarity in this number was made evident when Astaire appeared and managed to look threatening in his 135 pounds.

The number opened with a gloomy dark lit set similar to a film noir, which was used to illustrate the first of many dances in this finally. The style of dance is quite different from all other films that Astaire had done to present. The first number included a modern type of ballet, which was present in the teenagers' rising culture. In fact there was no tap dance in this dance sequence, which correctly interpreted the declining influence of tap dance in dance culture in the fifties. This first sequence paired Astaire with a woman in her early twenties but was choreographed to represent both of the dancers' capabilities. The mise en scene and its involvement were none existent as the dance provided powerful elements on it's own. In contrast to Singin' in the Rain the opening number did not offer the exuberance and panoramic views which Broadway Melody offered. However the varying styles between both finallies offered two different openings which were just as effective.

The next scene, after being attacked by three men, provided the appearance of Charisse in, once again, one of her seductive roles. Again, Charisse interpreted most of the dance as Astaire stood idol, while rampant movement occurred in the background creating a choreographic ensemble, which facilitated Astaire's task. The

dance sequence ended as Charisse seductively led Astaire into a museum, which provided the first choreographed fight scene. The blows, which were dealt were choreographed to the music and involved a doll, similar to Make em Laugh.

Astaire then performed another duet while rampant violence occurred in the background. As Astaire danced young dancers perform acrobatic dance steps in the background as each time a person got shot Astaire held a pose while the action in the background attracted the attention. Once again the exuberant dance movements which occurred in the background helped Astaire's performance in the foreground by adding depth to the dance ensemble.

Astaire's final dance scene provided a dance ensemble illustrating the rising influence of rock & roll. Astaire's choreography paralleled Kelly's seductive sequence in Broadway Melody, with the notable difference being Astaire's active participation as opposed to Kelly's idol stance. The stark difference in this dance sequence was Astaire's style, which illustrated no grace. It illustrated Astaire's versatility in attempting to emulate the rising dance styles of the early fifties. In addition to this change of style Astaire was exhilarating in yet another choreography which involved the use of props. The clever use of a bar, glass, and extra dancers created a fight dance scene, which was perfectly cued to the music. Once again the mise en scene had its say in the choreography by involving itself to the sequence. The difficulty arose because props had to be coordinated with several dancers as opposed to Donald O'Connor's Make Em laugh where only he dealt with the props.

The differences between The Girl Hunter and Broadway Melody were the extensive use of props, the involvement of auxiliary dancers, and the mise en scene. The Girl Hunter made extensive use of props, in the fight scenes, whereas the Broadway Melody's used props minimally, including the veil. The auxiliary dancers were used extensively in both numbers but the Broadway Melody number used the dancers mostly for décor whereas The Girl Hunter used them as active dance participants. Most of the sequences in The Girl Hunter used dancers in the background while Astaire danced in the foreground. Finally the mise en scene in The Broadway Melody number often did not actively participate in the choreography other than the rolling carpet. Whereas The Girl Hunter used the mise en scene in all of the fight scenes such as the bar, including various fighting objects. However the one constant in both films was the lack of the set's use as was the case in That's Entertainment and Good Mornin'. The sets remained idol as the talent in both the film's finallies only included the top rate dancers such as Astaire, Kelly, and Charisse. All other headline actors in the films, were sidelined in the finally which increased the quality of the dance numbers without worrying about dancing abilities, as was the case, most notably, in Triplets, You were meant for me, and Good Mornin'. However there

were other filmic factors which became issues in the closing numbers of these films, but were not mentioned, such as editing, camera work, and the story, to focus on the intent of the paper, whose focus was on the relationship between mise en scene and dance.

In conclusion this essay attempted to demonstrate how Singin' in the Rain and The Bandwagon were lucrative examples of how dance choreography interacted with the mise en scene, through the use of props, thus increasing or decreasing the level of difficulty. In addition to demonstrating how mise en scene interacted with dance, this essay also attempted to prove how the difficulty of dance choreography varied in relation to the actor's dance abilities. This essay has thus concentrated on the dance perspective in relation to mise en scene focussing on many scenes as opposed to analyzing one scene alone. In doing so, I conclude that this essay has successfully proven mise en scene's ability to interact with dance thus influencing its level of difficulty.

by Pierre Hobson