

THE HOLLYWOOD MUSICAL: *Evolution & Aesthetics*

This essay is an extravaganza of the Hollywood musical's camera movement and editing, during the revolutionary period of 1977-1999. The films in this essay's discussion include; Saturday Night Fever, Grease, The Wiz, An American in Paris, All That Jazz, Roller Boogie, Fame, Xanadu, Flashdance, Michael Jackson's History, White Nights, Dirty Dancing, River Dance, a Tap Dance concert offered at the White House with Savion Glover & company, scenes from Janet Jackson's 1999 tour, and a classic routine on skate's of Gene Kelly's "Singing in the Rain" as performed by Kirk Browning.

THE HOLLYWOOD MUSICAL 1977-1999

Evolution & Aesthetics

The Hollywood musical was often marked by changes, since 1927, both in front and behind the camera. However no changes were as contrasting and profound within a limited amount of time as the revolutionary period between 1977 and the present. This essay is an extravaganza of the Hollywood musical's camera movement and editing. Therefore it is strongly recommended that readers view the films mentioned because a lengthy discussion will take place on the aesthetics of specific scenes in the film. The films include Saturday Night Fever, Grease, The Wiz, An American in Paris, All That Jazz, Roller Boogie, Fame, Xanadu, Flashdance, Michael Jackson's History, White Nights, Dirty Dancing, and River Dance. Unfortunately three other sequences may not be available on video including, a Tap Dance concert offered at the White House with Savion Glover & company, Scenes from Janet Jackson's latest tour (available on video), and a classic routine on skate's of Gene Kelly's "Singing in the Rain" as performed by Kirk Browning.

The history

The Hollywood musical never vanished and is still as popular as it was in the thirties and perhaps more popular today. To understand this statement one has to realize that musicals were designed to showcase musical talent. The musical's most important element is its musical stars, such as Kelly, Astaire, Powell, etc... and its composers such as Porter, Berlin, Gerswin etc... all other elements are secondary. The Hollywood musical played to same role in the 30s and 40s that Much Music plays in the 80s and 90s. Much Music, HMV super stores, music videos, and concert touring are marketing tools, which have settled in one by one to replace the Hollywood musical! Today the music industry sells its product much the same way it did in the 30s and 40s by the performer's name and its composer i.e. Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones. Therefore when one takes this into consideration the understanding of what sets musical films apart from other genres just falls into place. The times and era changed and so did the musical art form as it simply evolved into something else as opposed to the misconception of it dying off.

The classic example of how musicals are misunderstood is how all film department's seem to ignore this musical genre, in general, simply because they try to study the genre using the same pretext as they would for Alfred Hitchcock and Orsen Wells films. Professors in general don't know what or how to explore the Hollywood musical because

they try to analyze the film in the same light as other genres, and quickly realize that there isn't much to analyze in this light. Unless you focus on the talent when analyzing the musical film genre, you miss the main feature and reason for the genre's being.

The Hollywood musical goes multimedia

The story of the Hollywood musical starts with vaudeville and Broadway because many stories and most of the Hollywood musical stars originate from these their height during the teens and twenties. However film came along and offered the same show but on a much bigger scale able to reach out to more people, which explains why Al Jolson decided to make the transition to film. Then TV came along in the fifties and changed the Hollywood musical as its beginnings were founded on talent shows. Early Television shows showcased earlier musical film stars and vaudeville specialty acts. Besides many of these earlier shows were hosted by the stars themselves like Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Judy Garland etc... During the sixties the Hollywood musical's existence shifted from TV and film to concert tours with musical talents like The Doors, The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, etc... The above examples illustrate how the Hollywood musical's purpose of being evolved and transformed its method of reaching out to people by shifting from vaudeville and Broadway to film to TV to mega concert.

The breaking point and revolutionary period began in the seventies and assures that the musical in here to stay. The seventies maintained the concert tour as a musical promoter but also added the music video industry, which are mini musicals in themselves. In addition, the seventies witnessed a Hollywood musical renaissance lasting from 1977-1983, a Jackson pop star phenomenon, and the beginning of the resurgence of swing and tap dance, which we now feel today. These were new devices conceived to promote musical talent thus keeping the Hollywood musical alive, but in an altered version!

Introduction

This essay will discuss the talent in relation to the off screen mechanics of editing and camera work to illustrate how they changed the way we view dance in the Hollywood musicals. I will argue that they changes are negative in certain respects because they destroy dance's continuity. A dancer named Fred Astaire taught the camera how to film dance, very little editing and full body shots! Full body shots are significant because unless you see the full picture the look and meaning changes. Imagine seeing a work by Picasso with part of the aide not shown or a sculpture with one arm or head not showing. The same applies to dance; cutting parts of the body changes the image significantly.

Editing on the other hand is important in terms of dance because it destroys the continuity of movement, which is dance's foremost principle. Film gave dance a gift because, prior to its invention, dance was perhaps the only art form, which could not be saved through the centuries precisely because it required a device, which could record and capture movement. Photography could not fulfill this role because it is composed of one frame still shots, which cannot capture movement. Editing on the other hand adds a photograph-like quality to film when it is used in access because it serves to discontinue movement by reducing dance to frames, so to speak.

This essay will point out the Hollywood musical's historical changes by explaining each clip's importance. Simultaneously the role of camera movement and editing will be

explained to illustrate how our view of dance was significantly altered. In essence the following essay will serve as testimony that the Hollywood musical, in its varied forms, is alive and well.

The films

Travolta opens this essay because he was the seventies' Astaire and both Saturday Night Fever and Grease have become classics in the same sense as The Wizard of Oz or White Christmas. Travolta's films ignited a brief return of Hollywood musicals by creating a new demand for singers and dancers.

Saturday Night Fever was included in this essay because of its historical significance and not for its camera movement and editing sequences. However this being said, many things can still be discussed in terms of film mechanics for the first clip featuring Saturday Night Fever the film's title song. The camera is practically always positioned in a long shot as opposed to focusing only on Travolta, which helped capture the feeling of the seventies era, its dancing, music, lights, and dense smoke. The one noticeable moment is the low angle shot while the camera moves through the crowd which really makes the dancing look that much more spectacular. In addition very few cuts were used which added to the general feel of capturing the moment.

The second clip opens with You Should Be Dancing which illustrates a classic Astairian (comes from Astaire's style) full body shot. Notice that there is less emphasis on the feet because it is not tap dancing, but the belt up is usually shown in its entirety. In addition throughout the sequence the camera insists on panning back to provide a panoramic view of the "star" with his crowd. This is once again a reflection of the times all about people by which the crowd was very much a "star" in the height of the Disco scene. On an interesting note there is the model dressed in green that stands right behind Travolta, whom never moves but just seems to be posing. She moves a couple of times in a robotic like fashion. I'm almost led to believe that she's a mannequin and not a real person. The camera's edits are composed of cuts from long shot to long shot which either cuts from Travolta back to Travolta or from Travolta to the crowd. The major difference in Saturday Night Fever is that the dancing is no longer as impressive as the 30s. the Dancing is meant to feature average people in a club, as opposed to a rehearsal as was the case in 30s scenarios. This allows the camera to capture the feeling of an era as opposed to the brilliance of a dancer or choreographer.

The dance competition number More Than a Woman depicts how the camera remains in its long shot format and insists on illustrating the crowd of on lookers. Ironically, as was the case in the 30s, the other dance couples or "other dancers" were better than the star attraction. The camera work is actually illustrating how different it works with Travolta than with the other couples. It focuses more on medium shots and shows more poses as opposed to illustrating dancing and close-ups. The editing is also much more rampant as it is used to cut the continuity of the dance and serves to hide the not so impressive quality of the dance number. Another character trait of this film as compared to older musicals was the illicit depiction of sex and drugs mixed in with dance, which was taboo in the 30s. Saturday Night Fever's dance sequences, in essence, focuses as much on images reflecting societal issues found within the crowds as it does on the dancing which

makes it a historical document that very realistically reflects the era.

Grease is another landmark film, which break taboos but also earned the status of a classic film. Summer Nights simply illustrates the brilliant use of simple editing to combine two different stories, in two different locations, pitting men against women with two radically different styles. It also includes a subliminal message situating men on top of the grandstand with women sitting at the bottom on the picnic table.

In Hand Jive the camera becomes alive by capturing the chaos of a high school's excitement of being on national TV. Once again a camera's pan across a grandstand enables the camera to capture the audience as they do the hand jive. There is very little camera work in this sequence because the camera is either, stable or remains at a far end as it pans from side to side. The editing for its part captures the different styles of dance by aimlessly cutting to random scenes. However notice how the stability and focus of the image changes once John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John step into the picture. We hear violins in the music and the shot looks like a textbook Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers scene for a moment. Besides the past is always present in Travolta's dancing because Fred Kelly in part trained him, who just happens to be Gene Kelly's brother. In addition we see him perform a number of slides, which is characteristic of Kelly's style, once his former dance partner joins him in a little dance. Also notice the emphasis on the saxophone in the music as opposed to violins when Travolta changes partners. The music illustrates the change of the images from sweet to rugged. The camera does move a bit more when Travolta dances with both partners but once again this sequence is conceived around editing which cuts from dance scene to dance scene.

The last sequence from Grease, We Go Together, summarizes the discussion for both Grease and Saturday Night Fever. The camera often positions itself far away enough from the action to allow people to run in front of the camera thus creating depth of field. The editing is simple and basically used to capture shots of either a crowd of people enjoying themselves or dancers with the crowds. Both of the styles of music were up and coming in the seventies with disco being introduced firmly while rock & roll was making a comeback. Therefore the emphasis on including the crowds during dance sequences or more importantly cutting from dancing to show crowds is explained in this phenomenon. Another noticeable difference in the use of pre-recorded music as opposed to having a live band. The camera movement was subordinate to editing in these first two films because the focus was using editing to cut to different actions while depicting a crowd as opposed to showing one dance sequence, as was most often the case with 30s & 40s musicals.

The camera begins to move in this next motion picture The Wiz, as the ghost of Busby Berkely appears to come to life. The Wiz features a 1978 version of a 30s grand musical number. The camera is basically tracing the path of the yellow brick road and therefore moves accordingly to trace the route. We could also notice the insistence on having people run in front of the camera's view, as was the case in the two previous films. The editing is secondary but does cut to some long panoramic views, similar to An American in Paris. In fact the shot, who includes music like a marching band looks exactly like the

same sequence in *An American in Paris* when the French guard makes their entrance in the number. We even see a tall structure in the center during a long shot, which is organized similarly to the long shot at the end of *An American in Paris*, when all the dancers circle the statue. We are treated to circus acts and specialty numbers, which honors the vaudeville era. This number was done in true Berkley style with a modern touch.

The next number is more of a fashion show but once again illustrates that the Hollywood musical moguls are still alive and well. There are more edits that provide a crucial role to the number than there are camera movements in a similar role. The camera movements consist of pans and tilts and possibly a couple of crane shots. Again the camera provides long shots, especially when the red sequence begins, illustrating the scope of the number. Similarly the gold sequence provides an extreme long shot, this time from a bird's eye view perspective. This number demonstrates that making glamorous numbers was still possible as we can appreciate the considerable expense that was put into these dance sequences. It's not a particularly good number but it illustrates that grandeur in the Hollywood musical is still possible in 1978.

In *Don't bring me bad news* the camera seems to be posted at either ends of the table while editing is used to cut back from one end to the other. This sequence is important because the camera behaves and captures movement in its full frame, in a continuous fashion unlike any other clip to this point in the essay. The last clip, which is very similar in the style of music, is similar in its formal terms but adds more dancing. Once again the sequence provide the finally to the movie and therefore includes the best number to illustrate how both camera movement and editing work together. The number demonstrates an important jazz dance element, which took over from tap dance as the leading style of dance in the 50s. This number has a bias attached to it because it is my favorite song in this film with plenty of dancing and camera/editing, which gave me a good excuse to include it. The handclaps in the music have this captivating feeling which makes you want to move.

The *All That Jazz* sequence features the harsh realities of a dancer's audition "cattle" call. It's performed to George Benson's *On Broadway*. The editing is composed of a series of cuts, which provides a visual representation of the process of illumination as fewer and fewer people appear in the cuts. The clip begins with a series of cuts illustrating a sea of bodies, which nervously waits as they warm up for their audition. A long shot begins the camera movement as it starts on the director and pulls back revealing hundreds of dancers, which are immediately followed by three cuts of different angles to exentrate the amount of people on stage. In addition the cuts to other people awaiting in the wings further emphasizes that despite the amount of people on stage there are many more to come. Then editing proceeds with three more cuts illustrating the general disinterest and boredom of the producers of this new show. The comedy skit with the lone guy, who is lost in his steps amongst many women, is also a true reality whereby you are always assured to find some character, who doesn't know what they are doing, in an audition.

The cuts of repeating dance choreography illustrates the amount of times different people

are trying the same routines as we can notice that after each cut the people doing the dance sequence changes. We then see more cutting to illustrate rejection of most people who audition for this show. One must realize that an audition is one full day of free work whether you get the job or not and if you don't get it its back to the drawing board the next day. Another series of cuts illustrates people singing which illustrates the next stage in the audition and thus the lucky few who made it to the next round. The final 12 cuts of people turning illustrates which people got the job. This sequence from *All That Jazz* is brilliant because, through editing, the realities of auditioning are made quite clear by using repetitive dance steps, and cross cutting. This film is also a first for graphically illustrating the pressures of auditioning. The other film to accomplish a two-hour film on the 6-minute sequence we have just analyzed is *A Chorus Line*, which, although not in this essay, illustrates the reality of auditioning in a full-length feature film.

The next film features the influence of roller skating on dance in the late seventies and early eighties, another art that has been revived with the nineties roller blade craze. Although this clip has a lot of cuts its importance is found in the very fast camera movement which occurs to keep up with the roller skaters. It's got its comedic elements to the sequence as well as imagining the camera operator on roller skates with his steadicam as he weaves in and out of the action. The sequence also features a song by Earth, Wind & Fire called *Boogie Wonderland*. Again this clip was really selected to illustrate the golden era of roller-skating, as being part of the Hollywood musical's path of evolution which entered the realm of dance. We also get to see a mambo like dance on roller skates with bird eye view shots which mirrored what we saw in the opening clip from *Saturday Night Fever*. However the camera appears to have been limited to the ceiling as the shot gives every indication of the operators willingness to go higher but couldn't.

They get fancy a bit by attaching a bunch of different people to a camera, which was either mounted on a spinning dolly or simply a camera operator with a steadicam attached to him. The film was used because, although it was a low budget film it represents a significant craze in the evolution of the musical combining dance and roller-skating.

Chaos & talent best describes the next sequence from *Fame* as editing helps us reveal different elements which come together to form the song which they perform. *Fame* was also a milestone film because its spin-off introduced the first weekly television drama about the performing arts. The clip demonstrates how all of those different people were reunited under the language of the performing arts. This clip was not included for its camera movement but rather for its editing. The editing was simple cutting from action to action within the cafeteria but it illustrated a commonality among all the different people as mentioned above. This clip was provided more on principle to illustrate this particular step in the history of the Hollywood musical.

Part II

Kelly's back! 68 years old and still ticking as he is reunited with Olivia-Newton John in *Xanadu* for an old style musical. *Xanadu* features a look at the influence of roller skates on the dance industry. The first clip called *Whenever your away from me* begins with a nice depth of field shot depicting Kelly in the foreground as he reminisces about the past

while Olivia Newton-John appears in the background. Notice, in this sequence, how the full body shot rules with generally fewer cuts and more fluent camera movement. Notice too, how this sequence occurred just three years after Saturday Night Fever yet its so much more stable and in many ways nicer to look at. It just comes to show, despite a long list of film musicals from the past, how quickly we forgot how to film dance. This clip demonstrates that it is still possible to produce a traditional dance routine, with traditional techniques in a modern context.

Dancin was provided simply on the basis of principle and illustrates how it is possibly to blend new music styles with older ones, and still gets good results. In essence the camera serves as a tool for depicting the dance while montage serve as a passageway between two different eras. The visual depiction, as two radically different styles of music are blended together, occurred towards the end of the number when both stages moved into each other demonstrating how its possible to blend two different genres of music. Xanadu is important because it offers a relatively traditional way of making musicals in a modern era when the musical had gone through radical changes with most people believing that the musical was dead.

Xanadu's finally was choreographed and staged in very much the same fashion as Singin' in the Rain's finally, as Kelly's pose opens the number as he moves into the camera on his skates. The cutting illustrates the different varieties of talent while the camera movement follows the various roller skating performances. Everybody seems to be performing their own show in their own little world in this finally. Although the editing's cuts seem random they are very well cued to the music as many seem to start a short dance section within the whole number. We can see Kelly's influence in this number because The Wiz also featured lengthy production numbers but did not look anything like this a few years back. Xanadu, in essence, provides an example, which demonstrates that it is still possible to make musicals with large production numbers in the eighties.

The Flashdance sequence offers a dance number filmed with full body shots. What a Feeling does not offer complexity in either editing or camera movement but provides simplicity instead. Nothing can be said of this clip other then observing how a nice and simple complicity between camera movement and editing can radically improve a dance number's over-all look. Ironically someone, in the musical genre comes along every so often and illustrates that they did their homework just by the way dance numbers are shot and cut within any given film. This clip was important because it was a box office hit in 1983 providing plenty to exposure to the musical genre. In addition the film was synonymous with the entire generation growing up in the mid-eighties. It's one of those films that people remember.

Michael Jackson's introductory montage in the best that I have ever seen to illustrate the mass hysteria which surrounds stardom thus explaining why the clip was included. It is fascinating to see the army of bodyguards and police, which accompany Michael no matter where he goes. That montage illustrates why we call him the king of pop in the last quarter of this century. In addition this montage provides an opening to the Michael Jackson sequence which we will analyze next.

Thriller is a first in many respects because it offered a radically new way of viewing and hearing your favorite songs. In fact it was not new at all because stories were incorporated into dance numbers all the time in the 30s and 40s. However Thriller was new to audiences in the eighties because, as Savion Glover mentions, the tradition of Tap Dancing along with the whole scene and era was almost lost, and this was true for the Hollywood musical as well. Most teenagers in the eighties did not know of these traditions found in the musical therefore Thriller provided a perfect opportunity to present an old tradition to new audiences and making it look original in every respect. The camera movement was sweeping at times because it had to provide a mood in relation to the theme, which was the living dead. Therefore there had to have been a certain amount of suspense reflected in the camera. This explains the opening crane shot in the later dance sequence, which provides a panoramic view of the monsters as they encircled the lone women. It is remarkable how simple the dancing is now that I have dance experience and know what it is difficult and what is not. The dancing is simple and so is the camera movement and as for the editing, it is a burden more than anything else. There is simply too much editing interrupting the continuity of the dance or perhaps it was used to hide the simplicity in the dancing. In addition the editing often cuts from body parts as opposed to showing the entire body which further distorts the dance sequence by only letting the audience see little bits of the choreography at a time. It is disturbing to me as a dancer because Michael Jackson is one person who could dance with a still camera and make it, look good!

Remember the Times offers a rather lengthy narrative prior to the main dance sequence so only the dance sequence was included depicting, in most part, upper body shots. The editing, in this sequence, is better than Thriller although once again there are many medium shots despite being tightly assembled. Subconsciously the heavy beat, which begins the dance sequence, plays into the editing and medium shots.

The Way You Make Me Feel is another Jackson sequence which, appears to have been shot with a steadicam just by the way the camera moves and travels. In the sequence where Michael is chasing his girl we see his full body whereas when Jackson starts dancing the editing becomes apparent especially when we see four dancers from a distance. It seems as though there is editing when there is no need and no editing when it could be included. In ending with this mini tribute to Michael Jackson we can contrast The Way You Make Me Feel with the rebellion sequence from the Black or White clip. In this final clip we are treated with the full body shots which enhances the overall image of dance. The camera is made apparent as it glides into Jackson while editing repeats the movement several times. The editing is composed of a lot of hard cuts simply to reflect the mood of the sequence. The rebellion sequence is perhaps one of the better sequences from Michael Jackson because the continuity of his dance movements are well preserved through an effect and limited montage and camera angles which allow us to see the entire movement.

Many forms of dance like tap dancing, ballet, and roller-skating, experienced re-births and others experienced a birth as was the case with roller-skating. Ballet was a form of

dance that has been around longer than any other genre yet it never managed to experience acceptance by a wider public. However, Barishnikov was in large part responsible for the best revival of ballet with *White Nights* and his star status as a ballet dancer. Barishnikov's movements are extremely vibrant because he covers a lot of ground when he dances. This forces the camera operator to be agile in order to avoid losing sight of the dancer. Especially in this sequence where Barishnikov's movements are not graceful but rather sudden which almost forces the operator to dance along with the choreography. What is nice about this clip however is that the camera captures the full body all the time. Ballet is the base of all dance forms but has never achieved wide spread popularity amongst the middle and lower classes so its inclusion is a fair tribute to this dance form.

At about the same period in late 80s the Latin dances, led by the Lambada, were also experiencing a rise in popularity as they achieved a wide spread acceptance unlike Ballet. In motion pictures the box office hit *Dirty Dancing*, helped spread the Latin fever to a wider audience with the pop status of Patrick Swayze. The first two sequences involve a steadicam, which glides into a crowd of sexy dancing bodies. The camera enters the room with a point of view shot, which illustrates what the two children were seeing as they were entering. However the point of view shot also reflects how the audience was seeing the dance as they were on-lookers to this new style of dancing. The audience is essentially playing the role of the young girl as she looked on curiously. There were no full body shots because the Latin style of dancing emphasizes the movements of specific body parts like the hips which explains why the camera shows only excerpts of body parts.

In contrast the finally is much more impressive as the camera circles the dance number and provides a variety of full body shots while still emphasizing the Latin style through editing. However the difference with the other clips lies in the music. Essentially the first clips provide a traditional style of dancing with traditional music whereas the finally makes use of a modern day song and adds jazz dancing to the Latin number. Due to the differences of music style, in the beginning and the end, the camera and editing were also altered to illustrate the same dance style in a different light. However cinema enjoyed only a brief moment with Latin dance because the crazy left film and filtered down into the grass roots with an entire generation rushing out to take Latin dance classes. Following the trend the next dance style to make it to the big screen was Tap dancing.

Tap provides an illustration of where and how tap dance originated while symbolically representing its comeback in 1989. Gregory Hines illustrates where tap dance basically came from, the streets. The multiple cuts here are reflecting how tap dancing, in its early stages got its sounds and ideas from the city/sidewalks. The camera edits and swivels in parallel to where the sounds were coming from. Although the clip does illustrate a younger generation enjoying tap, the truth suggests something different in that the film was criticized for its lack of dance and illustration of.

As the beat goes on and the fascination with traditional music continues swing also made its comeback as represented in *Swing Kids*. Both the camera and editing are alive in these sequences because swing dancing is vibrant as many different couples perform it at the

same time. Therefore in order to capture the essence of swing and the era, the camera has no choice, in this instance, to edit and move wildly as it does. The dance could be shot in full body with a still camera but the nightclub scene in the 30s and 40s is anything but still and continuous. Therefore this clip illustrates how the camera adapts to the situation while the editing captures as many different moments from the swing night.

The next sequence is very much a part of the evolution of dance, however it serves as a digression because it resembles nothing we've seen thus far. Kirk Browning performs Gene Kelly's classic 'Singin' in the Rain' number, on skates, thus providing the smoothest and most interesting camera movement and editing in all of this project. Skating is a subcategory to dance and has also experienced a comeback with the rise of international stars such as Kirk Browning. Interestingly enough the camera was forced to be in long shot all the time because the movements occur a lot quicker, similarly to the White Nights sequence, but ten times as fast. Therefore there is no way that the camera could move as swiftly to capture the movement as Browning travels and covers all of that space. Perhaps the only way to do it would be to have a person skating with a hand held camera and still it would prove to be quite the task.

The editing for its part is sidelined because the long shot captures all that the audience needs to see without disturbing the dance element. Again it would be extremely hard to cut to a close up because of the speed at which Browning is moving. However the abundance or lack of editing illustrates the varying roles of editing.

Finally the narrative quality in this number on ice has to do with its potential to give Hollywood musicals another avenue to explore in motion pictures. If the budgets were available the use of extensive backdrops could have enormous potential for recreating past works in the Hollywood musicals like *An American in Paris*. We saw motion pictures made up entirely of animated cartoons, why not have a picture with a narrative, entirely composed of a world on skates!

The next dance form to make it to the top was Irish dancing with *River Dance* front and center featuring Michael Flatley. Irish dancing was also a great help for traditional tap dancing, as people often tend to confuse both genres. In the two clips we saw references to Busby Berkley as some bird eye view shots illustrated the forms which many of the bodies took. The editing was peculiar because despite the cutting to show different points of view, the dancing was never interrupted. They are always doing the same thing so it's hard to interrupt the choreography. The standard postures and base steps are always the same. *River Dance's* appeal was based on hearing people does the same thing as opposed to seeing them. The idea of hearing is quite contrary to seeing as Fred Astaire taught audiences in the beginning of the thirties.

In this light the editing, although it is quite active, does not affect the continuity of the dance because they are always doing the same thing, therefore you don't miss a thing when cuts occur. The cuts alternate a lot more between full body movement, bird eye view shots, long shots and close ups of the feet. The editing, one could say also show influences from Eisenstein as the speed of the rhythm between cuts, increases as the

dances gets quicker towards the end. Although editing played many different roles it is still subordinate to the importance on hearing in River Dance.

The camera movement is simple because all it does is glide along the movement from far away behind the audience and right in front of the stage. The camera movement is limited because it is shooting a live concert as opposed to pre-staged events which can be rehearsed as in motion pictures. We will see more of this from this point on because the next performances are all live.

The next clip originating from the White House was included on principle to illustrate the stark difference between Irish dancing, Fred Astaire, and Hoofing. It is shot live and therefore the camera was restricted to panning along the back of the audience while another was stationed on the corner of the stage. It's a cool number designed to make you want to watch it more than once. This clip was an illustration of what real hoofing is all about.

Finally the last segments in this project features Janet Jackson live at Madison Square Garden in her 1998 North American tour. This segment is shot live and therefore restrictions are placed on the camera movement leaving no room for second takes. The difference in this live concert is the atmosphere and mood of this concert, which adds to the dance, regardless of the camera's restrictions or editing.

The camera's restrictions has to deal with thousands of people jumping up and down which means, many arms and head in your view. However in this segment the emphasis is on what you see and feel as opposed to the way you see it. Therefore the camera movement and editing are once again subordinated by the hype of the concert tour.

This analysis is different in that I saw her live at the Molson Center just a couple of meters away from the stage and there are definitely differences when watching it from a video. First of all you see much clearer images of defined facial expressions on video even when you are close to the stage live. The light shows have a blinding effect and often enable a person a clear view of facial expressions. The camera does provide the dancer with several perspectives, which you will not see live. The editing is apparent despite the numerous full body shots, which enable the audience to see the body in motion in its entirety.

There are four clips in the Janet Jackson sequence because they summarize what we've been talking about in the two research projects and cover four different aspects. The first clip is straightforward in that it features dancing with no props or real intervention of mise en scene. The second clip features straightforward dancing but adds an acrobatic element where each dancer is featured one by one to allow Janet to catch her breath. The third clip illustrates the intervention of mise en scene whereby the entire clown décor took less than five minutes to set up. The dancers jump onto the décor and use it as a devise to rest from straightforward dancing. Janet even mentions this earlier in the show admitting that she needs her breathe, after the second number where she then sat down and did a few slow numbers with a guitarist. The fourth clip used props as opposed to

mise en scene, to add a level of difficulty to a dance number. The camera movement and editing in these clips adds to the distortion of the dance by adding discontinuity to the flow of the movements, I can't stress that enough!

In conclusion this essay has attempted to discuss the talent in relation to the off screen devices of editing and camera work to illustrate how they changed the way we view dance in the Hollywood musicals. My argument, although there were some exceptions, has remained the same in that these devices, in their current day use, destroy the continuity of dance by interrupting the flow of the movements. Finally as this essay has attempted to illustrate the influence of camera movement and editing in the way we view dance, it has also provided a historical account of the evolution of the musical. In doing so this essay has illustrated the historical changes, which have taken place in the musical by stating each clip's importance to the evolution of dance in film. In essence the following essay has served as testimony that the Hollywood musical, in its varied forms, is alive and well.

by Pierre Hobson