FROM CONCERT TO FILM: THE TRANSFORMATION OF GEORGE GERSHWIN'S MUSIC IN THE FILM "AN AMERICAN IN PARIS"

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ABSTRACT

In 1951, Saul Chaplin, John Green, and Conrad Salinger adapted the music of composer George Gershwin (1898-1937) for a film musical titled *An American in Paris*, the finale of which was a 17-minute ballet scene set to a modified version of the composer’s tone poem from 1928. The plot bears broad similarities to isolated aspects of George Gershwin’s life. Such narrative elements offered a scaffold for an attractive subtext explored through the film score: a review of the trajectory and breadth of George Gershwin's compositional career from 1922-1937. My own analysis of the film and its score, using the techniques of Lars Franke, further illustrates how the creators of *An American in Paris* used the cinematic frame to comment on George Gershwin's life and to respond to contemporary critics as well as fans of his music.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Gershwin’s music has graced many a movie, but never so successfully as in this winner of the 1951 Academy Award.¹

The above quote is taken from the record jacket of the original soundtrack album of the film An American in Paris, a musical released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios in 1951. The highlight of this particular film was a seventeen-minute ballet, with a set design inspired by six Impressionist painters, and accompanied by an abridged version of the orchestral tone poem of the same name, originally written in 1928 by American composer and popular songwriter George Gershwin. The film also includes six additional songs also written by Gershwin, with the lyrics written by his brother, Ira Gershwin, as featured musical numbers.

The film’s musical team was made up of three experienced songwriters and arrangers of stage and film music, John Green, Saul Chaplin, and Conrad Salinger. All three men worked extensively to adapt and change themes of the concert piece to fit the choreography of the ballet. They were also responsible for transforming the six other Gershwin songs into the musical numbers of the film. Chaplin, Green and Salinger also created the film’s unique incidental score, which exclusively contained re-orchestrated Gershwin songs. Whether or not the filmmaking team was aware, the musical visually commented on aspects of composer George Gershwin’s life.

Historical Context

The history of *An American in Paris* is only a small part of the history of film music and film musicals in general. To start with, music has always been paired with film since the beginning of the motion picture industry. So-called “silent” films were not completely silent; movie houses would provide live musical accompaniment – performed either by orchestra, or on a single upright piano or theater organ – to follow the action on screen. The music that was played often varied with every showing of a particular silent film, yet typically it was re-orchestrated or abridged versions of works by classical composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, or Wagner. One of the first examples of an original film score came from the 1915 silent film *Birth of a Nation*; this score featured a hodgepodge of newly-composed musical themes, arrangements of popular Civil War-era songs, and even an arrangement of Richard Wagner’s *Ride of The Valkyries*, all of which accompanied and enhanced the on-screen action.² When sound films, or “talkies,” became more common in the late 1920s-early 1930s, they were scored in a similar manner. As Wilfrid Sheed remarked, “The first talkies needed music the way the silents needed epic…to strut their stuff and show what they could do…”³

During and after the transition to sound film in the late 1920s, it was the musical that became the most popular of all film genres. Beginning with *The Jazz Singer*, released by Warner Brothers in 1927, film musicals were in very high demand until the

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Many early examples of this genre from the late 1920s-1930s were dubbed “back-stage” musicals, as their central conflicts concerned the rehearsal and performance process of putting on a stage show. The plots of these early “back-stage” musicals were almost nonexistent, for the singing and dancing in the musical numbers was always the main feature. The plots of later film musicals were slightly more developed, yet they were always still considered less important than the musical numbers.

The scores for the early film musicals of the 1930s were provided by songwriters who came straight from Broadway or Tin Pan Alley. Wilfrid Sheed makes note of a number of East Coast musicians who traveled west to write motion picture scores, among them Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, and of course, George and Ira Gershwin. The Gershwin brothers contributed scores for the comedies *Shall We Dance* and *A Damsel in Distress*, and the revue *The Goldwyn Follies*. Even after George Gershwin’s death, his film music career continued, with films such as *An American in Paris*. This film transformed what was originally a symphonic poem written by Gershwin into a ballet score. The transformations did not end there; the film’s creators also adapted a selection of songs by George and Ira Gershwin that originally appeared in other stage and film musicals.

This film musical was produced during one of the most productive eras in the history of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios; film historians often refer to the 1930s-1950s as the “Golden Age” of American cinema. Beth Gennè says that roughly around

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5 Sheed, 82.
the late 1950s, the overall production of film musicals declined, due to the changes in popular musical styles, and the “gradual collapse of the Hollywood studio system of the late 1950s and 1960s.” From the early 1960s onward, film musicals continued to be produced, yet there were not as many as there were a generation earlier. Film musicals with original screenplays were also not as prevalent by this time; instead, later film musicals that were produced were often what Graham Wood has dubbed “stage transfers,” shows that first gained popularity on the Broadway stage, and were later adapted for the screen. Some of the more notable stage transfers that were produced during the early 1960s include the film versions of *West Side Story* and *My Fair Lady*. Taking this into account, *An American in Paris* can be seen as one of the last original film musicals produced during the “Golden Age” of Hollywood.

This film is also one of the many examples of how the music of George Gershwin was reused and recycled after his death. Other examples included the biographical film *Rhapsody in Blue*, from 1945, and also the 1947 musical *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*; this film’s score was created by Ira Gershwin – with help from long-time Gershwin friend Kay Swift – using previously unpublished tunes written by the late composer, set to brand new lyrics. While their musical numbers in these films included songs that were written by Gershwin, the incidental scores were written by other composers. Unfortunately, both *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim* and *Rhapsody in Blue* were not very big

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successes. There were also the film versions of two of Gershwin’s successful Broadway shows; there was *Girl Crazy*, released in 1943, and *Funny Face*, released in 1957. The plots of these two films were either loosely – or in the case of *Funny Face*, not at all – based on the original stage shows, and the music, while mostly by Gershwin, included some interpolations from outside sources. *An American in Paris* was one of the only film musicals to be produced during this posthumous period that contained a score that was wholly Gershwin.

For its time, the plot of *An American in Paris* is far more developed than the plots of earlier film musicals; however the central conflict is still the standard “boy-meets-girl, loses-girl, wins-girl…” outline that many musicals tend to fall into. The characters are further developed by their backgrounds and occupations. What makes this film unique is its story, which was specifically created to serve the music that it featured. Instead of showcasing song after song with no discernable reason whatsoever, in the manner that some musicals operated, the numbers appeared because of dramatic actions that set up a need for musical activity.

This film, which the Encyclopedia of Popular Music has called “one of the most enchanting of all film musicals,” gained critical acclaim and numerous awards when it was released back in 1951. At the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences award

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ceremony in March 1952, despite heavy competition from other highly-acclaimed films of that year, the musical won six awards: Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, Best Scoring of a Musical, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, and Best Color Cinematography. The Academy’s Irving Thalberg Award, given to the best producer of the year, was presented to Arthur Freed, marking the first time a producer of film musicals was given this honor. Lastly, an honorary Oscar was also presented to actor and choreographer Gene Kelly for his outstanding versatility in and contributions to the film musical genre.

Literature Review

The literature for this study falls into three different categories: sources about film scores and film musicals, sources about the composer George Gershwin, as well as about the original composition, and sources about the film itself. The literature regarding film scores and film musicals helped me to understand the process of film scoring that occurred during the early 1950s, when this film was released. The biographical literature on Gershwin was used to discover similarities between the composer’s life and the dramatic action in the musical. Reviewing the full history of the production of the film made it possible to identify the individual changes made to the title composition, as well as the purposes for making the film.


The body of literature on the subject of film music is immense. Most studies of film music, such as those written by William Darby, Peter Larsen, and Tony Thomas, among others, only address the incidental scores used in so-called straight films. Other sources, especially *The Technique of Film Music* by Roger Manvell and John Huntley, examine the practices of scoring musicals. Manvell and Huntley, among other film scholars, explore how the inclusion of certain pieces of music in individual scenes – whether pre-existing or original – helps to identify the mood of those scenes, or its characters. The different functions of film music that each of these sources discuss is important to my study, as this film musical employs some of the film scoring techniques that they mention, such as the incorporation of leitmotivs and the technique of “mickeymousing,” in which the film’s music mirrors the on-screen action. This technique was so named because it originated in the incidental scores of early Disney cartoons.

The literature addressing the film musical genre itself often overlaps with sources that concern stage musicals. Graham Wood is one of few scholars who explore this particular film genre. One of the questions he asks in his article, “Distant Cousin or Fraternal Twin?” is whether or not film musicals can be thought of as an offshoot of stage musicals. Wood considers three areas when looking at film musicals: technology, style, and genre, which he explains as follows:

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12 For the purpose of this study, the phrase ‘straight film’ denotes any film where there is no musical activity present, or if there is, it is not the main focus of the film.

Under technology the principal areas of focus are advances in sound and colour, the mobility of the camera, and the way in which such changes affect the way musicals look and sound. Questions of genre explore the difference between stage transfers (those based on a pre-existing stage show) and original movie musicals (those with no stage musical precedents), different versions of a show, and the sources of the music...Issues of style subdivided into three areas: musical, visual and dance. Musical style includes the notion of *diegesis* – that is, the extent to which music featured on the soundtrack could plausibly emanate from a source within the visual frame or the narrative as a performance, a rehearsal, or some other likely musical activity. Visual style focuses on contrasts of realism, abstraction and fantasy, the comparison of spectacles that are either stage influenced or movie-specific, and recurring iconographical symbols. Dance style considers an array of dance types…and the number of people involved in performance.  

Wood’s questions regarding genre and technology have been useful in my analysis of *An American in Paris* and have enabled me to situate it in the development of musical films. In the case of technology, Wood points to the advances made in the field of sound recording. By the early 1950s, it was standard practice to record the vocal and instrumental tracks for the numbers in the recording studios, and then play them back during shooting while actors lip-synched. The soundtracks for this film were most likely recorded in this same manner. Wood’s two categories for genre are relevant to my study: musicals that were originally conceived for the screen, and “stage transfers,” or musicals that were originally made famous on the Broadway stage and then adapted for film. Of all the film musicals that were released in the 1940s and early 1950s, the quantity of originally conceived musicals was slightly greater than the quantity of stage transfers. *An American in Paris* is clearly an originally conceived screen musical, with a plot written to center on its musical score, yet it is also a fine subject for examining one of the many...  

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approaches to transforming previously composed music into a film score. Thus the film is significant in both categories.

Many of the musical, visual, and dance styles discussed by Wood are evident in the film. One feature that affects visual style in many musical films, including An American in Paris, is the “dualism between realism and fantasy…”¹⁵ This dualism is nowhere more evident than the final scenes of the film; the transition to the fantasy world of the ballet, and the subsequent transition back to “reality.” The musical numbers also demonstrate an aspect of the dance styles included in the film; ballet and tap, primarily, but there are some inclusions of waltz and popular dances in other numbers.

Scholarship on Gershwin and his compositions

Of the many biographies written about George Gershwin in the past thirty years, by far the best are the books Gershwin (1987) and The Gershwin Years (1996), both written by Edward Jablonski; the latter was co-authored with Lawrence Stewart, who worked as Ira Gershwin’s personal assistant for a time. Philip Furia’s biography of Ira Gershwin (1996) also provides useful information. Ira’s lyric-writing career after George’s death is explored fully, including the contributions that he made for the musical An American in Paris. Furia also examines certain song lyrics, and interprets them as Ira’s commenting on society.

In 1993, Joan Peyser wrote a rather critical account titled The Memory of All That, filled with information about the composer’s private life. Peyser conducted personal interviews with family members and acquaintances to discover more about the man and

¹⁵Wood, 220.
the time in which he lived. However, the book barely touches on the musicality of Gershwin’s songs and concert works, and at times, Peyser’s writing reads like a sensationalist magazine. Still, the account provides some useful information, especially about Gershwin’s final years in Hollywood.

William Hyland is another recent Gershwin biographer who discusses the impact of the composer’s legacy. His 2003 biography includes an entire chapter titled “Keeping the Flame,” which discusses all the posthumous efforts made to keep the composer’s music and legacy alive; these efforts include the numerous memorial concerts staged in the years following Gershwin’s early death, as well as the many different biographies and analytical studies of his songs and concert works that were written. Hyland documents in detail Ira Gershwin’s efforts at “keeping the flame”, including his work as a lyricist and serving as a consultant for many posthumous Gershwin films – many of which were not very successful – and his compiling of his brother’s correspondence and manuscripts, eventually giving them to the Library of Congress. The film An American in Paris is included in Hyland’s review of films that used Gershwin’s music posthumously. He does not share his personal opinion on the matter, except to say that An American in Paris was a “more successful movie project.”

Howard Pollack takes an exhaustive look at the composer’s life and career in his 2006 biography. He mentions the film musical as part of his summary of how often the original composition An American in Paris has been recorded in the years following Gershwin’s death. Unlike Hyland, Pollack freely gives his personal opinion of the film.

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He goes on to say that regardless of the great artistic talent that was involved in the making of the film, the famous ballet scene “trivialized the piece,” that the changes that were made “severely undermined the piece’s integrity, however well they served the ballet’s choreographic and visual needs.” Overall, it is a negative viewpoint; according to him, the musical forever changed how the general public heard the original composition. I do not believe this statement to be true, as the composition in its original form is still a main staple of many orchestral repertoires. I maintain that the film strengthened the integrity of the tone poem, and also gained a much larger audience.

Sources about the Film

Sources about the film’s history are the most prevalent, ranging from newspaper articles that chronicle the film’s achievements, to doctoral dissertations on the history and artistic design of film musicals. The dissertations written by Beth Genné and Joseph Casper were the most helpful in understanding the filming techniques and artistic design of many film musicals of the 1950s, particularly concerning those directed by Vincente Minnelli, the director of An American in Paris. Hugh Fordin’s book, MGM's Greatest Musicals (first published in 1975 under the title The World of Entertainment), provides a brief history of the making of An American in Paris, as well as all other musicals specifically produced by Arthur Freed, noted film producer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. However, the best source by far was Donald Knox’s well-written account entitled The Magic Factory (1973), which chronicled the full history behind the making of An American in Paris, and also provided an insight into the talents involved in film

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17 Howard Pollack, George Gershwin: His Life and Work (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 444.
production at the MGM studio during the early 1950s. Around the time of the studio’s collapse in the 1970s, Knox gathered information for *The Magic Factory* by conducting direct interviews with nearly everyone who worked on the film, including Freed and Minnelli, actor and choreographer Gene Kelly, actresses Leslie Caron and Nina Foch, and musical directors Saul Chaplin and John Green. Unfortunately, orchestrator Conrad Salinger and actor Oscar Levant are both absent, as they had both passed away shortly before Knox began work on this biography.

Another source about the making of the film comes straight from Saul Chaplin himself. His 1994 autobiography, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, documents his background as a songwriter, and his experiences as a producer and musical director with film studios such as Warner Brothers, Columbia, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, where he worked on *An American in Paris* and other musicals. Chaplin’s own words from this autobiography describing his work on the musical were very beneficial to this study.

The full range of source material served this study, and assisted me in accomplishing this analysis of both the composition and the film, with special attention paid to the ballet music. This study will differ from earlier analyses made by other music scholars, mainly because of the breadth of the source material. As previously noted, I have compiled sources concerning the individual histories of art, theater, and film, as well as music. I have managed to make all of this source material to come together and create this unique study of this topic. To start with, a brief biography of the composer and study
of the original composition is needed to understand the methods for the creation of the musical.
CHAPTER 2: GEORGE GERSHWIN AND HIS MUSIC

Biography of George Gershwin

George Gershwin was born Jacob Gershwine on September 27, 1898 in Brooklyn, New York, the second of four children of Russian Jewish immigrants. His piano study began around 1910, when his parents purchased a piano for his older brother, Ira, who was at the time taking lessons from his aunt. Ira was a reluctant piano student, therefore twelve-year-old George took over the instrument. Many biographers relate the following story: as soon as the piano was hoisted into the Gershwin family’s apartment, George sat down and without any formal training, played a popular tune. Of course, George’s ability did not materialize out of thin air; he had been interested in music since the age of ten, and had been experimenting for some time on a player piano at a friend’s house. Nevertheless, George, and not Ira, was viewed as the musical talent of the family from then on. Gershwin received formal piano training from several neighborhood teachers, yet the best teacher he had was Charles Hambitzer, a pianist and sometime composer who instantly recognized Gershwin’s talent and gave him a solid foundation in classical piano repertoire. Much later, he studied harmony, theory, and orchestration with Hungarian musician Edward Kilenyi.

Many of Gershwin’s influences were popular songwriters, most notably Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern. He was also influenced by several African-American jazz pianists working in Harlem, most notably Luckey Roberts and James P. Johnson. As a

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18 Biographers Edward Jablonski and Joan Peyser, among others, have often mentioned that the composer was never called Jacob as a child, he was always called George. The reason why is not known. Jablonski also notes that “Gershwine” was most likely pronounced as “Gershvin.”

composer and orchestrator, Gershwin admired the serialist composer Arnold Schoenberg, with whom he became well acquainted when he lived in Hollywood. Another influence in this field was Gershwin’s close friend and fellow composer William Daly, who orchestrated much of the composer’s early Broadway scores.

In May 1914, at the age of fifteen, Gershwin had dropped out of school to start his first full-time job, as a “song plugger” for Remick’s, a song publishing company in Tin Pan Alley. His main duties for the company were to demonstrate songs to prospective customers; the only songs he was allowed to play were the songs written by the staff songwriters. By this time, he was attempting to write songs himself, but the staff at Remick’s banned him from demonstrating any of his attempts. It was in 1917 that Gershwin left Remick’s, going on to various jobs as an accompanist for musical stage shows. One of those jobs was as a rehearsal pianist for a Broadway revue entitled Miss 1917. Edward Jablonski mentions that this show, though a commercial failure, provided “Gershwin’s first experience with a real Broadway production.” Miss 1917 introduced the future Broadway composer to the various tasks that were involved with producing a Broadway show. This revue also featured a musical score co-written by one of Gershwin’s songwriting heroes, Jerome Kern.²⁰

Shortly after the close of Miss 1917, Gershwin met Max Dreyfus, who gave George a position as a songwriter with the T.B. Harms publishing company. He also encountered Broadway producer Alex Aarons, who gave him the opportunity to write his first musical score for a stage show called La-La-Lucille. At this point, excluding the La-

Gershwin had written several original popular songs, including a song called “Swanee,” with lyrics written by a colleague named Irving Caesar. It was “Swanee” that became Gershwin’s first big national hit, when popular entertainer Al Jolson recorded the song in 1920. The success of “Swanee” attracted the attention of George White, who was the successful producer of the stage revue series, *George White’s Scandals*, which were similar in nature to the popular *Ziegfeld Follies* shows produced by Florenz Ziegfeld. White contracted Gershwin to contribute music for his *Scandals* shows from 1922-1924. The *Scandals* shows produced few memorable Gershwin hits; for the *Scandals of 1922*, Gershwin wrote a one-act opera with jazz-influenced melodies called *Blue Monday*, which turned out to be very unpopular. One very popular hit from that same show was the song “(I’ll Build a) Stairway to Paradise,” with lyrics written by B.G. DeSylva and “Arthur Francis,” who was actually Ira Gershwin, writing under a pseudonym so he would not be accused of riding the coattails of his brother’s growing fame. Ira would give up this pseudonym a few years later. The same year, Gershwin contributed a few songs to a Broadway show called *For Goodness Sake*; one memorable song that came from this show was “Tra-La-La,” again with lyrics by “Arthur Francis,” and introduced by the leads in *For Goodness Sake*, actors Marjorie Gateson and John Hazzard. Both “Tra-La-La” and “Stairway to Paradise” would be successfully re-introduced later, in the 1951 film *An American in Paris*.

The year 1924 was an important year for Gershwin. Bandleader Paul Whiteman, who had become acquainted with Gershwin during the *Scandals* shows, provided a major opportunity for the young composer when he announced a concert titled “Experiment in
Modern Music.” Whiteman’s concert was purely for self-promotion, but its outward purpose was an educational attempt at answering the question “What is American Music?” as well as incorporating jazz in the realm of “American Music.” He was intrigued by the one-act opera Blue Monday, which was such a disappointment in the Scandals shows, and often spoke to Gershwin about his writing another concert work with jazz influences. Whiteman commissioned Gershwin to write a serious work for this concert; this work eventually became Rhapsody in Blue, a piece scored for piano and jazz band that featured blue notes and improvised-sounding passages similar to jazz. Rhapsody in Blue was orchestrated by the composer Ferde Grofé, and first performed by Whiteman’s band, with Gershwin as the piano soloist. The “Experiment in Modern Music,” featuring the Rhapsody, took place at Aeolian Hall in New York on February 12, 1924. The Rhapsody, and the concert as a whole received mixed reviews, yet many of the critics realized Gershwin was creating a new brand of music.

In between subsequent performances of Rhapsody in Blue, Gershwin, along with his brother Ira, was also hard at work writing music for Broadway shows. The Gershwin brothers’ first successful musicals opened in the year 1924: the Broadway show Lady, Be Good! and a show in London entitled Primrose. Of the two musical comedies, Lady, Be Good! was more popular; the show introduced two songs that would later become very popular standards, “Oh, Lady Be Good!” and “Fascinating Rhythm,” and it also featured in the leading roles the song-and-dance team of siblings Fred and Adele Astaire, who both had been good friends with the Gershwin brothers since George’s days working at

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21 Jablonski, 69.
Remick’s. The show’s plot was very thin and unremarkable compared to the outstanding musical score; however Lady, Be Good! was considered the most original Broadway musical of the year.\textsuperscript{22} The very next year – 1925 – Gershwin premiered his second work for the concert hall, the Concerto in F; this piano concerto also indicated the composer’s first attempt at orchestration.

The year 1926 marked Gershwin’s first visit to Europe, when he spent a week with his friends Robert and Mabel Schirmer in Paris, before moving on to London for the opening of one of his musicals. While staying with the Schirmers, he began work on what would eventually become the symphonic poem An American in Paris; Mabel Schirmer’s comment of his progress at this point is often quoted in many biographies: “He had only the original, the [first] walking theme, the way An American in Paris starts…after that first theme, he was a little stuck. He said, ‘This is so complete in itself, I don’t know where to go next.’” Gershwin overcame his writer’s block on a shopping trip – with Schirmer – to the Avenue de la Grande Armée, where he found the taxi horns that would later be incorporated into the tone poem.\textsuperscript{23} Upon returning home, he divided his time between writing the new composition and working on yet another Broadway musical with Ira.

Gershwin returned to Paris in March 1928, this time accompanied by Ira, his younger sister Frances, and Ira’s wife Leonore. By this time, he had completed a solo-piano version and a two-piano reduction of An American in Paris before ever leaving

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 86.
New York. All that was left to do was the orchestration, which Gershwin planned to do in Paris. Besides writing, attending concerts and parties, and sight-seeing, there was one more important feature on the composer’s itinerary, as Ruth Leon explains:

George was, as usual, on his search for a teacher when he arrived in Paris. He had previously approached [Maurice] Ravel…Ravel turned him down because, as he told [singer] Eva Gauthier, ‘It would probably cause him to write bad Ravel’…When George talked to [Igor] Stravinsky the older composer asked him how much he had earned from his music in the preceding year. Startled, George did a quick calculation and told him… ‘Well, my young friend,’ Stravinsky retorted, impressed, ‘then perhaps I ought to study with you.’

On a recommendation from Ravel, Gershwin then sought out the French composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. She too rejected his request to study with her, for like Ravel, she felt that there was nothing she could teach him. Any outside teaching that Gershwin received may have ruined the style he had already developed, both in his popular musical scores, and in his concert works *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Concerto in F*. Gershwin handled the rejections from Ravel, Stravinsky, and Boulanger lightly, as they were all somewhat complimentary in their own way. Gershwin even became good friends with Boulanger, and maintained that friendship long after he had returned to New York in June. Gershwin finally finished the orchestration for *An American in Paris* on November 18. The composer described the program for his tone poem during an interview with the magazine *Musical America*:

This new piece…really a rhapsodic ballet, is written very freely and is the most modern music I’ve yet attempted. The opening part will be developed in typical French style, in the manner of Debussy and the Six, though the themes are all original. My purpose here is to portray the impression of an American visitor in Paris, as he strolls about the city…The rhapsody is programmatic only in a

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general impressionistic way, so that the individual listener can read into the music such as his imagination pictures for him.
The opening gay section is followed by a rich blues with a strong rhythmic undercurrent. Our American friend perhaps after strolling into a café and having a couple of drinks, has succumbed to a spasm of homesickness. The harmony here is both more intense and simple than in the preceding pages. This blues rises to a climax followed by a coda in which the spirit of the music returns to the vivacity and bubbling exuberance of the opening part with its impressions of Paris. Apparently the homesick American, having left the café and reached the open air, has disowned his spell of the blues and once again is an alert spectator of Parisian life. At the conclusion, the street noises and French atmosphere are triumphant.²⁵

Composer and music critic Deems Taylor prepared a more detailed program for the premiere concert, of which Gershwin approved; Taylor’s narrative matched Gershwin’s themes with an adequate emotion or action to make it easy for the concert audience to understand the program. The piece was premiered by the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Walter Damrosch, at Carnegie Hall on December 13, 1928. The reviews of the new piece were mixed, with the bulk of them comparing and contrasting it to his earlier serious works, the *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Concerto in F*; however many of the critics were in agreement that Gershwin was maturing as a composer with *An American in Paris*.

In October 1930, the Gershwin brothers’ most successful Broadway show premiered, *Girl Crazy*. This musical comedy is significant in that it introduced many of George and Ira Gershwin’s most famous Broadway songs, including “I Got Rhythm,” “But Not For Me,” and “Embraceable You.” It is also famous for featuring then-unknown actresses Ginger Rogers and Ethel Merman in lead and supporting roles.

²⁵ Quoted in Jablonski and Stewart, 139-140.
respectively. Merman’s performance, as well as her rendition of “I Got Rhythm,” made the song a household name, and in turn launched her stage and film career. The song “But Not For Me” was introduced by Rogers in this same musical; she would later go on to act in several successful film musicals alongside dancer Fred Astaire.

In the fall of 1930, Gershwin was contracted to write the music for his first film musical, Delicious. As musicals were fast becoming a very popular genre in the early days of sound films, the Gershwin brothers moved to Hollywood for this task, following in the footsteps of many other Tin Pan Alley and Broadway songwriters who moved out west to write for the movies. When the job was finished – roughly around January 1931 – George and Ira moved back to New York, and focused their attention back to Broadway. Despite featuring a brand new instrumental piece which was later published under the title Second Rhapsody, the film Delicious did not perform well in theaters. Gershwin was involved in many different projects in the early 1930s. In addition to writing scores for Broadway musicals, the composer wrote the concert works Cuban Overture (originally titled Rhumba), and the “I Got Rhythm” Variations for Piano and Orchestra. He also made his debut as a conductor in this period, when he conducted An American in Paris at one of many all-Gershwin concerts held at Lewisohn Stadium. Also during this period, Gershwin began studying composition with Joseph Schillinger, and began developing ideas for another opera.

Gershwin became inspired to try another opera when he first read Porgy, a novel about African-American life outside of Charleston, South Carolina, written by DuBose Heyward. Immediately, Gershwin recognized that the novel’s subject matter would work
well for an opera. In 1932, Heyward and Gershwin began developing ideas and transforming Heyward’s original story into the libretto for what would become *Porgy and Bess*. Ira Gershwin wrote the lyrics for the opera’s songs, sometimes by himself and sometimes in collaboration with Heyward. The entire score was finished by mid-1935, and the first production premiered October 10, 1935 at the Alvin Theater on Broadway, with Todd Duncan and Anne Brown singing the title roles. *Porgy and Bess* received a mixed reaction from the public at the opening night performance, and even to this day it is still controversial; questions have been raised as to whether it is a real opera instead of just a musical, but the harshest critics often point to its portrayal of African-Americans.

The Gershwin brothers moved to Hollywood to stay in 1936, as they had again taken a job composing for film musicals. Their first job during this period was *Shall We Dance*, the seventh film to feature Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers paired as a dance team. After this film came *A Damsel in Distress*, starring Astaire without Rogers, and lastly, *The Goldwyn Follies*, a film revue. Some of the Gershwin brothers’ simplest and best known songs came from this late film era, such as “Nice Work if You Can Get It,” “They All Laughed,” and “Love is Here to Stay,” among others.

George Gershwin died from a malignant brain tumor on July 10, 1937. After his brother’s death, Ira Gershwin continued to work as a lyricist with composers such as Harold Arlen and Kurt Weill, among others. However, he felt that his main job in his later years was to keep George’s legacy alive, which he did, in a number of ways. He was consulted and often asked to contribute lyrics to musical films that used George’s music, such as the film *An American in Paris*. He also catalogued much of the
composer’s correspondence, manuscripts, and tune books, and donated them to the Library of Congress. Ira was responsible for improving and maintaining this collection up until his own death in 1983.

*An American in Paris* – A Thematic Survey

While George Gershwin’s earlier concert works were dominated by piano, the tone poem *An American in Paris* is his first composition that did not feature a piano part. The title page, written in Gershwin’s own hand, reads as follows:

*An American in Paris*

A Tone Poem for Orchestra

Composed and orchestrated by George Gershwin

Begun early in 1928, finished November 18, 1928

Apparently, Gershwin felt the need to indicate on the title page that he orchestrated the piece himself, as many critics had previously doubted his orchestration abilities. Despite the composer’s own description of it as a “rhapsodic ballet,” the piece does not use the form of a conventional rhapsody, or any other standard form previously used by other symphonic poems. Also, the indication of “tone poem” on the first page of the autograph clearly indicates that the work was intended for the concert hall.

It is important to look at each of the themes in *An American in Paris* separately; although this task is sometimes difficult, as they often overlap. Each theme has a descriptive name attached; the themes’ names come from the narrative guide written for

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*27* Leon, 92.
the composition’s premiere by Deems Taylor. In the narrative, Taylor created a scenario involving an American protagonist wandering the streets of the French capital. For my study of each of these themes, I will refer to the descriptions written by Taylor in the original narrative guide to conclude what they are representing. Where necessary, I will also refer to keys and measure numbers from the published score of the tone poem to indicate where these passages begin, and in what key they are presented.

At the start of the piece, the strings and oboes introduce the first section with an eight-measure passage in F major known as the “First Walking Theme.” The “First Walking Theme” represents the American protagonist of Taylor’s program notes, as he strolls down the Champs-Élysées. This passage is restated and developed until measure 95.28

![Musical notation of the "First Walking Theme"](image)

Gershwin uses French taxi horns for the first time in the piece at measure 30. After the taxi horns, a quotation of *La Sorella*, a march written in 1905 by French composer Charles Borel-Clerc, is presented in the trombone section at bar 96.

![Musical notation of "La Sorella"](image)

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This theme is identified as “La Maxixe” in Taylor’s narrative, which runs as follows: “… our American apparently passes the open door of a café, where, if one is to believe the trombones, *La Maxixe* is still popular.”

“La Maxixe” – sometimes spelled “La Mattchiche” – was a Brazilian dance that was popular in France in the 1900s. *La Sorella* was likely set as a “maxixe” dance, as their rhythms are similar. The “La Sorella” theme is only heard once, unlike the taxi horns, which are heard several times throughout the piece. The inclusion of both the taxi horns and the “La Sorella” theme provides a French flavor to this wholly American concert piece.

After the “La Sorella” theme, the “Second Walking Theme” shortly follows, “announced by the clarinetist in French with a strong American accent,” as Taylor writes. The “Second Walking Theme” also represents the American. This theme is in the key of B-flat.

The French taxi horns interrupt this theme at measures 132-135. The “Second Walking Theme” is stated several more times, often times the statements are interrupted by the taxi horns, or other instruments. These statements could possibly represent the American protagonist exploring the different neighborhoods of the French capital. As the fragments of the “Second Walking Theme” migrate through the different instruments in the orchestra, they are further shortened. The entire section ends at measure 201, where a final fragmented version of the “Second Walking Theme” is sounded.

An English horn solo begins a transition to the next section of the tone poem, in the key of E-flat. The next section, now in the key of E major, is called the “Left Bank” theme,\textsuperscript{30} and it begins at measure 249 in the score, where it is stated by the low brass instruments. The woodwind section answers this new music with a fragment of the “First Walking Theme.” This theme indicates that the American protagonist of Taylor’s narrative has crossed over the Seine to explore the Left Bank.

\begin{music}
\begin{musicnotation}
\begin{musicframe}
\begin{musicsection}
\begin{musicpart}
\begin{musicbar}
\begin{musicnote}
\end{musicnote}
\end{musicbar}
\end{musicpart}
\end{musicsection}
\end{musicframe}
\end{musicnotation}
\end{music}

In Taylor’s narrative, the end of the “Left Bank” section indicates that the American protagonist is “exploring the mysteries of an Anise de Lozo.”\textsuperscript{31} In other words, the American is getting drunk on a popular licorice-flavored drink of the era. The “Left Bank” section of the tone poem ends roughly around measures 355-357, with a lone flute playing a fragment of the “First Walking Theme.”

A new transitional section includes a passage – in F major – featuring a solo violin, which, in Taylor’s words, “approaches our hero (in soprano register) and addresses him in the most charming broken English and, his response being inaudible – or at least unintelligible – repeats the remark.”\textsuperscript{32} A celesta solo begins this section, paving the way for the solo violin, which enters immediately at measure 362. This

\textsuperscript{30} Taylor’s narrative guide refers to it as a “Third Walking Theme,” and also describes that the audience is to imagine that the American protagonist has arrived on the Left Bank of the Seine when this music is heard. Incidentally, in the beginning of the film An American in Paris, the opening narration refers to the Left Bank, and this music is then heard as underscoring. Taking this into account, it is hereafter called the “Left Bank” theme.

\textsuperscript{31} Taylor, 111.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
passage is answered by a fragment of the “First Walking Theme,” played by the oboe. The “First Walking Theme” fragment from the oboe may represent the American protagonist’s “unintelligible,” or possibly drunken, response to the solo violin.

The next theme, the “Homesick Blues,” is in the key of B-flat. A solo trumpet presents this theme at bar 396. According to Taylor, the American protagonist has suddenly become homesick. This section also features the first appearance of a saxophone trio – alto, tenor, and baritone – accompanying the solo trumpet.

From measures 446-467, the “Homesick Blues” theme is presented several times, as the section appears to explore several different keys – F, B, D and C major, as the American protagonist in turn explores the depth of his homesickness. The end of this section includes transitional material based on the “Homesick Blues” theme, which leads to the next section.

The next theme is called the “Jazz” theme, and is in the key of D major. The music is first stated in the trumpets at measure 482, and again by the full orchestra at measure 494. Taylor notes that at this point in the piece, “it is apparent that our hero
must have met a compatriot [who is also American]; for this last theme is a noisy, cheerful, self-confident Charleston without a drop of Gallic blood in its veins.”

The Jazz theme is presented for a final time at measure 540, after which is a transition to the coda.

At measure 564, a fragment of the “Homesick Blues” is presented by the full orchestra, with fragments of the “Second Walking Theme” in between, stated by the brass instruments. This last “Blues” passage does not seem to imply any form of homesickness, instead, it is “a happy reminiscence rather than a homesick yearning…” according to Taylor.

The Coda begins with the recapitulation of the “First Walking Theme” at measure 592. The French taxi horns also return in this section, as the orchestra begins a sort of mad rush to the end. This is this section in which Gershwin himself, and not Taylor, had described that “the street noises and French atmosphere of

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
Paris are triumphant,” and the music of this coda accurately reflects that. The home key of F major returns at measure 645, which also features the final statement of the “First Walking Theme” music. The final five measures present the final fragment of the “Blues,” stated by the alto saxophone.

Taylor’s program notes helped encourage one popular viewpoint of the concert piece years after the first performance in 1928. This view of An American in Paris would later be modified for a different audience in the early 1950s, when Arthur Freed, Vincente Minnelli, and others created the “American in Paris Ballet.”

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35 See footnote 25.
CHAPTER 3: AN AMERICAN IN PARIS – THE FILM AND ITS MUSIC

The history of the film

Beth Gennè calls the musical An American in Paris “the first in a trilogy of ‘catalogue’ musicals made…in the 1950s: Singin’ in the Rain and The Band Wagon…complete the series”; these three films are called “catalogue musicals” simply because of the fact that their scores contained previously composed popular songs by a particular songwriter or songwriting team. 36 Much of the credit for the conception of this musical goes to Arthur Freed, who worked as a producer of film musicals for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (hereafter referred to as MGM).

Freed started working with the MGM studio in the late 1920s as a songwriter for film musicals. His transition from lyricist to film producer came remarkably easy, as told to Donald Knox: “Louis B. Mayer [co-founder and head of MGM] was very interested in musicals, and I started with [a film called] Broadway Melody. I wrote the songs, and they were rather big hit songs. After that, Mayer and I became friendly. He eventually said, ‘I want you to get into the production of musical pictures.’” One of Freed’s first major projects in this venture – and one of his first big successes – was the musical The Wizard of Oz, released in 1939. 37 Freed and his production team, the “Freed Unit,” which consisted of only the first-rate cinematographers, musicians, set designers, and other crew members, released the most successful of all of MGM’s musical films. By the

late 1940s, the Freed Unit had produced musicals such as Anchors Aweigh, Meet Me in St. Louis, The Pirate, and On The Town, all of which were major successes.

Freed had been good friends with the Gershwin brothers during his early songwriting career. During much of the 1940s Freed and Ira Gershwin often met every Saturday night for games of pool. Around 1949, during one of these meetings, Freed asked if Gershwin would sell him the rights to An American in Paris for use in a musical. Gershwin said yes, with the stipulation that this proposed film would use only songs written by him and his brother, in addition to the title composition. Freed agreed, and a deal was then made between MGM and the Gershwin estate for the rights to the title, and any additional songs to be used.38

Screenwriter and Broadway lyricist Alan Jay Lerner was assigned to write the screenplay of An American in Paris. Lerner and Freed discussed many different story options; the city of Paris was undoubtedly going to be the setting, but other issues, such as the time period – one of the suggestions they came up with was to set it in the 1920s, around the same time when Gershwin’s music was at the height of popularity – or whether or not it was going to be biographical, were discussed. Lerner voted down the idea of making this musical a full biography, as he explained to Donald Knox:

To write a biography of a flesh-and-blood character would be fighting the style of what I felt the picture should be. It had to be a fictitious character and situation so that I could establish the level on which people would be thinking, feeling, and seeing...A man’s life is made up of thousands and thousands of little pieces. In writing fiction you select twenty or thirty of them. In a musical you select even fewer than that. But you cannot do that with a flesh-and-blood figure.

38 Ibid, 12.
Automatically you will be disemboweling him. So the idea of a Gershwin biography was discarded.\(^{39}\)

Freed eventually came up with the main premise after reading a magazine article about American soldiers leaving the Armed Forces after World War II to stay in Europe. Coincidentally, Hugh Fordin reports that Freed had also received a request from actor Gene Kelly who wished to make a film about an American soldier-turned-painter living in Paris.\(^{40}\) To accommodate both ideas, the time period for the film had to be in the present day, and the main character of the musical became an American ex-GI who stays in Paris after the war to study painting. Although the proposed film was not biographical, Freed mentioned that the American protagonist would possibly represent George Gershwin himself.\(^{41}\)

With this plot foundation in place, Lerner began writing the screenplay: “I didn’t want it to be just a cavalcade of songs. I wanted to write a story so the songs would appear because of the emotional and dramatic situation.”\(^{42}\) The preliminary idea of the American artist in Paris was developed further; the final plot of the film, as written by Lerner, centers on an ex-GI named Jerry Mulligan, and his life as a struggling artist in Paris. He meets a wealthy American heiress who is interested in his paintings and offers to support his artistic career, secretly desiring a romantic relationship in addition. Meanwhile, Jerry falls in love with Lise, a young Parisian girl that he meets in a nightclub, and pursues a relationship with her, while keeping it secret from his sponsor.

\(^{39}\) Ibid, 40.
\(^{41}\) Knox, 37.
\(^{42}\) Ibid, 40.
Lise, at the same time, keeps a secret from Jerry; she is already engaged to be married to a friend of his. The Gershwin songs and the title concert piece *An American in Paris*, when used as either numbers or as incidental music, served to further emphasize the emotional situations in the plot. A detailed synopsis of the film’s plot can be found in Appendix B.

The film’s musical crew included Saul Chaplin and John Green as the musical directors, and Conrad Salinger as orchestrator. All three men had had successful careers as arrangers for stage and film musicals, and, in the case of Chaplin and Green, as popular songwriters. Green, in particular, was directly influenced by Gershwin, having worked for him in the 1920s as a copyist for the score of *Rosalie*, one of the late composer’s stage musicals, and he also orchestrated the songs for his later film musical, *Shall We Dance*. As a result, when he was asked by Freed to re-create the “Gershwin sound” for this musical’s score, he had a good idea of how to approach this task.

By 1950, Green was also the head of the music department at MGM, and conductor of the studio orchestra. Since Green was often occupied with his duties as head of the music department, it was Saul Chaplin that spent the most energy on the musical score. He and actor Gene Kelly made numerous trips to Ira Gershwin’s house and spent countless hours discussing and playing through possible songs to be used as musical numbers. Chaplin was looking for songs that weren’t largely popular, yet he did not want to select numbers that were completely unknown; in short, he was looking for tunes that

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43 Knox, 90, 155.
were “typically Gershwin.”

According to Chaplin, the task of going through the full Gershwin catalog was like “walking into a hitherto undiscovered gold mine. I would play an obscure song and say, ‘We have to use this…’ By this process, I wound up with a score of about twenty-five songs…” The songs that eventually were transformed into the musical numbers of the film were well-known songs such as: “S’Wonderful,” “Embraceable You,” “I Got Rhythm,” and several unknown numbers: “Love is Here to Stay,” “(I’ll Build a) Stairway to Paradise,” “Tra-La-La” and “By Strauss.” To create the incidental score, tune fragments were taken from the above numbers, themes from the title symphonic poem, and other popular Gershwin songs, such as “Nice Work if You Can Get It,” “Bidin’ my Time,” “Someone to Watch Over Me,” and others. Overall, the musical directors used twenty Gershwin pieces total in this film.

Chaplin and Green both had to change and rearrange themes to suit the choreography, as well as match up particular themes with the styles of the Impressionist painters which were a main feature of the ballet’s visual design. Both men, but especially Chaplin, had reservations about changing the composition, which were borne mostly out of respect for the late composer:

I had great trepidations about repositioning and adapting [George] Gershwin’s themes. I regard his serious music with the same respect I feel for the music of any other important classical composer. I identify with him even more, because his roots are in jazz, which I was brought up with and understand. In fact, he was the first composer who made American jazz an acceptable art form…I felt his music should be played the way he wrote it. And yet there was I, about to tamper with it. Every time I made a change, I was haunted: Would Gershwin approve?

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44 Ibid, 48.
46 Chaplin, 137-138.
John Green cites another reason for the adaptation: ease in recording. The title tone poem, in its original form, could not be recorded easily, as the speed and volume would have to be adjusted constantly in an effort to match the music with the on-screen action. Making the changes to the score beforehand allowed for much easier recording sessions. However, Green goes on to mention that “if George [Gershwin] had been alive and on the picture…neither [Chaplin] nor [Salinger] nor I would have done any adaptation. George would have done it. But he would have done exactly what we did; I know it.”

Kelly was appointed the film’s choreographer, as his dance experience was rooted in ballet and modern dance, and was also cast in the lead role as the American painter, Jerry Mulligan. The female lead role of Lise Bouvier went to a nineteen-year-old French ballet dancer named Leslie Caron; both Kelly and Freed had expressed interest in getting a “bona fide French girl” for the film, instead of an American actress playing a French girl. Kelly had made a screen test of Caron after seeing her in a ballet performance in Paris, and after he and Freed had reviewed all the screen tests of actresses for this part, Caron was unanimously decided as the favorite. An American in Paris was to be her film debut.

Oscar Levant, an actor, pianist, and onetime close friend and aide of George Gershwin, was given the supporting role of Adam Cook, a struggling American concert pianist and Jerry’s best friend. The role of Henri Baurel, the French music-hall singer – and Jerry’s romantic rival – went to actor Georges Guetary, after Freed had spotted him

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47 Knox, 156.
48 Fordin, 309.
singing in a Broadway musical. Rounding out the supporting cast was dramatic actress Nina Foch as Milo Roberts, the wealthy suntan-oil heiress who begins sponsoring Jerry’s painting career.

Vincente Minnelli\(^{49}\) was assigned to direct the film. Minnelli began his career as an artistic designer and director of Broadway shows during the 1930s. This film marked the second time Minnelli had collaborated on a musical with Gene Kelly; the first time had been *The Pirate*, produced in 1948.\(^{50}\) The film was shot on a backlot of the MGM studio, rather than on location in Paris, which would have proved too time consuming and expensive. Many pains were taken to create sets on the MGM lot that looked like authentic Parisian streets, and every aspect of the film – the sets, script, and the extras – was checked for accuracy by Alan Antik, a French native and the film’s technical advisor.\(^{51}\) Lastly, a camera crew was sent over to Paris to film various monuments in the city, such as the Place de la Concorde fountain and the Place de l’Opera, which both later appear in the ballet finale; these establishing shots of the French capital were featured in the very beginning of the film.

Meanwhile, during shooting, supporting actor Oscar Levant had become deeply depressed, seemingly because of the fact that his character did not have much to do. To integrate himself further into the picture, he devised an idea for a musical number that he called the “Ego Fantasy”; Levant would play the third movement of the Concerto in F, not just as the piano soloist, but he would also be seen as the conductor, he would play

\(^{49}\) Minnelli’s first name is normally pronounced “Vincent;” the director added the final –e onto his first name when his career first began.

\(^{50}\) Gennè, 306.

\(^{51}\) Knox, 74-80. Some of Antik’s memos to Minnelli regarding various inaccuracies that he discovered, as well as corrections, can be found here.
the other instruments in the orchestra and at the end of the fantasy, he would be seen applauding himself from the audience. However, there was a possibility that his fantasy number would not be filmed. Hugh Fordin states that Arthur Freed had made it clear from the very first day that aside from the title ballet, “there would be no ‘concert music’ in the picture,” his reason being that he did not want any lulls in the film. This executive decision was a major blow to Levant; being a classically-trained pianist he was the one person on the cast most associated with concert music. Freed’s idea for Levant was to have him instead play a medley of Gershwin songs, which Levant did not want to do. Instead of going directly to the producer, Levant explained his “Ego Fantasy” proposal to Vincente Minnelli, who liked the idea, and in turn relayed it to Freed, who, surprisingly, allowed it to be filmed. The shots of Levant shaking hands with himself at the end of the number were accomplished by the studio’s Optical Effects department, led by Irving Ries.

The ballet finale and musical numbers were filmed separately from the dramatic scenes. Before this, no one had any plan of how the ballet was going to proceed, plot-wise; both Minnelli and Kelly each had vague ideas that they wanted to include in this dance number – including the notion of a sequence based on Toulouse-Lautrec’s Chocolat portrait – but there was hardly anything formalized. The only aspect of the ballet that was set in stone was that it would use the piece An American in Paris as accompaniment. Minnelli was finally able to work on the ballet’s structure when supporting actress Nina Foch suddenly fell ill with chicken pox; her absence halted

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52 Fordin, 311.
53 Knox, 121.
filming of some of the final scenes. He, Kelly, and costume designer Irene Sharaff, who was hired to create costumes specifically for the ballet, spent several days locked in Minnelli’s office working out various ideas.\(^5^4\) The plot of the ballet eventually became a journey through the French capital that played out in the protagonist’s mind. The version of Paris in the ballet is the Paris that once was the city of the Impressionist painters – Raoul Dufy, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Maurice Utrillo, Henri Rousseau, Vincent Van Gogh, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec – whose styles are represented in the set design. Minnelli also remarked that his inspiration for the ballet’s plot partially stemmed from Deems Taylor’s program notes written for the 1928 premiere of the original piece.\(^5^5\)

Devising an effective transition into the dance scene was the most difficult task. There was no song, spoken dialogue, or voice-over narration planned that would inform the audience of the start of this number. Minnelli came up with a charcoal drawing of the Place de la Concorde that Kelly’s character had sketched, and later ripped in half and discarded in the scene before the finale. Kelly, in turn, came up with a red rose which Leslie Caron’s character held in an earlier scene in the film. These two items were settled on as an effective transition; the black-and-white charcoal sketch would be the background for the beginning and ending of the ballet, and the red rose became a visual leitmotiv for Caron’s character in the dance.\(^5^6\)

Irene Sharaff’s ballet costumes were created based on themes from the tone poem; while playing a recording of the original piece, she came up with characters that she

\(^{5^4}\) Ibid, 138.
\(^{5^5}\) Ibid, 141.
\(^{5^6}\) Ibid, 136.
associated with certain musical passages. For example, the “Pompiers,” or firefighter characters that Sharaff created, were based on the “La Sorella” theme from early in the piece. The other ballet characters that Sharaff created were the red and white “Furies” – female dancers in red and white costumes, various Parisian citizens that were seen in many of the ballet’s sequences, and the American Servicemen that join Kelly in a tap dance midway through the finale. Once Sharaff had finished designing a particular sequence, costumes and all, she would hand her designs to Kelly, around which he could create the choreography.\textsuperscript{57}

The ballet finale ended up lasting nearly seventeen minutes, and costing around $500,000 when it was finally completed. The first preview of the film was a disaster. After this first preview, the finished film went to be edited to shorten the length and hopefully improve audience reaction. Part of the problem was with the ballet ending, according to Saul Chaplin; no one in the preview audiences applauded the ballet when it ended; he felt that the audience couldn’t applaud because they “didn’t know where because the music never spelled out “The End.”\textsuperscript{58} Chaplin immediately rescored the music, replacing the initial quiet ending he wrote with the last five measures from Gershwin’s original composition, where a fragment of the Blues theme is stated; in the original tone poem it is stated by the alto saxophone, in the rescored film version it is stated by the orchestra’s brass section. That one change made it easier for the audience to sense when the ballet, and thus the film, was finished. When the picture was finally released to the public, it was a success.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 144.  
\textsuperscript{58} Chaplin, 140.
Analysis of the Songs

Each number in the film will be analyzed as follows: the history and original source of the song will be presented first, followed by a brief summary of the film action leading up to the number, and a chart which breaks down the number’s sequence. The charts include the section of the song that is presented, followed by the accompanying film action, and any other relevant information about the number. Song lyrics will also be included if the number features vocals; there are three non-vocal musical numbers. Coincidentally, these three non-vocal numbers are all performed in fantasy settings. The “sequential breakdown” charts are based in part on the methodologies of Lars Franke. Following the chart will be a short commentary on how the number represents an aspect of George Gershwin’s life and career. The analyses of each number will conclude with the film action that occurs immediately following the number. A chart summarizing the appearance of each musical number can also be found in Appendix A.

Embraceable You

The first number, “Embraceable You,” is also the first non-vocal fantasy sequence (see Appendix A for lyrics). The song itself dates back to 1928; it was intended for a stage show called East is West, which was never produced. It went unused until 1930, when it was interpolated into the score of a musical called Girl Crazy. The set up to this scene features the two supporting characters, Adam Cook and Henri Baurel (played by
Oscar Levant and Georges Guetary, respectively). In the scene, Henri is telling Adam about his new fiancée Lise Bouvier (Leslie Caron), a girl he had taken care of during the Second World War, and describes her attributes as best he can, regardless that many of his statements are conflicting. Henri’s descriptions transition into the number’s fantasy world, which introduces Lise to the film’s audience, and attempts to visually comment on Henri’s conflicting descriptions. The six sequences that introduce Lise are each set against a background inspired by a different artistic style. A chart showing the breakdown of the “Embraceable You” number is shown below.

Table 3.1: Sequential Breakdown of “Embraceable You”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Descriptive Dialogue</th>
<th>Mood conveyed – artistic background$^{59}$</th>
<th>Location in Orchestra of Main “Embraceable You” Tune/style of arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:07</td>
<td>“…Not very beautiful, but with great beauty…”</td>
<td>Beautiful – Baroque</td>
<td>Strings; old world Baroque arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:31</td>
<td>“she’s an exciting girl…”</td>
<td>Sexy – Victorian</td>
<td>Solo saxophone; jazzy-sounding arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:57</td>
<td>“…she’s sweet and shy…”</td>
<td>Old-fashioned girl – Louis XIV</td>
<td>High strings; Classical arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:19</td>
<td>“…she’s vivacious and modern…”</td>
<td>1920s jazz – art deco</td>
<td>Brass; 1920s Charleston arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>“…reads incessantly…”</td>
<td>Studious – Jacobean</td>
<td>Woodwinds; tune is highly ornamented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:08</td>
<td>“…gayest girl in the world…”</td>
<td>Joyous – Biedermeier</td>
<td>Low strings, with piano and high strings harmonizing over tune; joyous and triumphant arrangement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{59}$ Fordin, 317.
At the end of the sequence, the scene shifts back to reality. Adam still seems confused at these fantastic descriptions of Lise, and so he asks Henri, “Let’s start over again, shall we? What’s she like?” Henri responds with laughter.

By Strauss

A rare Viennese waltz parody, “By Strauss” dates back to 1936, where it was featured in *The Show is On*, a Broadway revue also directed by Vincente Minnelli. At the time, George and Ira Gershwin were living in Hollywood, where they were working on the score to a film musical called *Shall We Dance*. One night, with Minnelli visiting, they began improvising and playing around with a Viennese waltz, with George at the piano exaggerating the accents and lifts in the music; the tune was left behind in order to finish the film score. Months later, when Minnelli was in New York directing *The Show is On*, he wrote them asking about the Viennese waltz tune they were playing around with, and if it was possible to have it for his stage show. George and Ira quickly finished the tune for Minnelli and mailed it to him in New York. Biographer Philip Furia notes that “By Strauss” became the Gershwin brothers’ very last song written for the Broadway stage.60 When the song was premiered, its original lyrics ran as follows:

VERSE
Away with the music of Broadway!
Be off with your Irving Berlin,
I’ll give no quarter
To Kern or Cole Porter
And Gershwin keeps pounding on tin!
How can I be civil when hearing this drivel
It’s only for nightclubbing souses
Oh give me the free and easy waltz that is Viennesey
And go tell the band, if they want a hand,
    The waltz must be Strauss’!
Ya, ya, ya! Give us oom-pa-pa!
CHORUS
When I want a melody lilting through the house
    Then I want a melody,
By Strauss,
    It laughs, it sings, the world is in rhyme,
Swinging to three-quarter time,
Let the Danube flow along, and “The Fledermaus,”
    Give me wine and give me song,
By Strauss,
    By Jove, by jing! By Strauss is the thing,
So I say to Ha-cha-cha, heraus!
    Just give me an oom-pa-pa,
By Strauss.

When the song was selected for An American in Paris, the first five lines of the verse were re-written. The reason for the revision, according to Ira Gershwin, was because of the lyrical reference to songwriters Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and Cole Porter. The MGM Legal Department informed him that they would have to get permission from Porter, Berlin, and the Kern estate to feature their names in the number. Sorting out these legalities would not have been impossible, but it was “less bothersome” to re-write the lyrics. The version of “By Strauss” that was featured in the musical had these new lines, which preserve the humorous nature of the original:

The waltzes of Mittel Europa
They charm you and warm you within,
While each day discloses
What Broadway composes
In the film, the scene leading up to the song runs as follows: Jerry Mulligan (Gene Kelly), on his way to sell his paintings in the Montmartre district, has just come down to meet Adam in the Café Huguette, and Adam has just introduced Jerry to Henri. Adam is seated at the piano in the café playing jazz when Henri expresses his dislike of the music. Adam teases Henri by playing a waltz tune for him. All three interject mocking Austro-German words and phrases in between the song’s lyrics. After the entire song has been presented once, there is a dance interlude, complete with a waltz danced between Jerry and an elder flower merchant. This next chart shows the full breakdown of the “By Strauss” sequence.

Table 3.2: Sequential Breakdown of “By Strauss”

- Leads featured: Gene Kelly (Jerry), Oscar Levant (Adam), Georges Guetary (Henri)
- Supporting characters: Café proprietor and his wife, elderly flower saleswoman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Musical section presented (verse/chorus lyric)</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:26</td>
<td>Verse introduced “The waltzes of Mittel Europa……emptiness pounding on tin”</td>
<td>After some playful Austro-German wordplay from three leads, Henri introduces verse, with Adam at piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:41</td>
<td>Abrupt pause in music</td>
<td>Adam and Jerry interject mocking Austro-German phrases (“Mein</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:48</td>
<td>Verse continues “How can I be civil……the waltz must be Strauss’!”</td>
<td>Adam and Jerry mock-duel at end of verse section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:16</td>
<td>Last line of verse “Ya-ya-ya! Give us oom-pa-pa!”</td>
<td>All three sing last line of verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:28</td>
<td>Chorus begins “When I want a melody…”</td>
<td>Henri begins chorus, Adam and Jerry join in at “By Strauss…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:05</td>
<td>All three characters join in for last chorus part “By Jo, by Jing…”</td>
<td>Three leads sing final lines of chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:34</td>
<td>Second presentation of chorus “When I want a melody…”</td>
<td>Henri sings and dances with Jerry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:54</td>
<td>Chorus continues “Let the Danube flow along…”</td>
<td>Henri begins dancing (awkwardly) with female café owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:05</td>
<td>Chorus stops abruptly, orchestral fanfare takes over</td>
<td>Adam interrupts chorus with shout of “Gentlemen! The Emperor!” as male café owner enters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:22</td>
<td>Unseen orchestra begins presentation of chorus</td>
<td>Jerry begins waltzing with elder lady, a flower merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:35</td>
<td>Chorus melody is interrupted by quotation of Strauss piece <em>Tales of the Vienna Woods</em> (quote was possibly thrown in by musical arranger) chorus melody continues</td>
<td>Dance continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:55</td>
<td>All characters “La-la”</td>
<td>Song and dance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The presentation of the number not only introduces the three lead characters, it also comments on the song’s origins. George and Ira Gershwin’s musical clowning session which resulted in “By Strauss” is re-interpreted for the film, with the two American characters teasing the European who enjoys the outdated classical music tradition. At the end of the number, the scene changes abruptly to show Jerry walking towards Montmartre to sell his paintings.

I Got Rhythm

The next number, “I Got Rhythm,” features Jerry singing with a chorus of French children. The original song dates back to 1930 and the Broadway musical Girl Crazy. In the show, the song was introduced by a then-unknown stage actress named Ethel Merman; this musical, and this song in particular, helped to launch her very successful stage and film career. “I Got Rhythm” enjoyed a resurgence in popularity when in 1934, Gershwin used the well-known melody to compose a theme and variations for a concert tour; the instrumental piece was titled “I Got Rhythm” Variations for Piano and Orchestra. The chorus of this song is presented in AABA, the song form used for most popular songs of the day. The original lyrics are as follows:

**CHORUS**

*I Got Rhythm, I got music*
In the film, the only lyrical changes made were in the phrase “I Got My Man…” which was changed to “I Got My Gal…” for a male singer, and, instead of “I Got Starlight/I Got Sweet Dreams…” the chorus returned to the opening “I Got Rhythm/I Got Music…” In the film, Jerry, having returned from Montmartre and his first meeting with Milo Roberts, is greeted by a large number of Parisian children that he’s befriended. The children beg him to teach them English words, and Jerry agrees. Jerry then introduces “une chanson Americaine/an American song”; he teaches them to say the two words “I-Got,” which lead to the number. Jerry begins to sing the song, with the children interjecting “I-Got” in the appropriate places, in the following manner:

FIRST CHILD: I-Got!
JERRY: rhythm…
SECOND CHILD: I-Got!
JERRY: music…
THIRD CHILD: I-Got!
JERRY: my gal, who could ask for anything more?

The scene that builds up to the “I Got Rhythm” number is a good example of one of the many ways numbers in various film musicals are introduced, according to Joseph Andrew Casper, who notes that “the dialogue [of the preceding scene] contains words
and phrases that will appear in the lyrics of the song.”

Jerry’s teaching “I-Got” to the children is to let the audience know that a song is about to be featured, and that song is “I Got Rhythm.”

Casper also comments about the musical number’s using a song as a teaching tool for young children, and notes that this is a common feature in other musical comedies, such as The King and I and The Sound of Music. This teaching tool works to help young children effectively retain the material, and to “render the dry business of education palatable.” The entire breakdown of the “I Got Rhythm” number is featured below.

Table 3.3: Sequential Breakdown of “I Got Rhythm”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Chorus Section</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26:25</td>
<td>N/A; scene building up to number</td>
<td>Jerry teaches English words to French children; introduces “une chanson Americaine/an American song”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:31</td>
<td>Chorus starts; section A presented (with repeat) “I Got Rhythm/I Got Music…”</td>
<td>Kids learn phrase “I-Got”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:46</td>
<td>Section B “Old man trouble…”</td>
<td>Jerry begins singing with kids interjecting “I-Got”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:07</td>
<td>Return of section A “I Got Rhythm…”</td>
<td>Song continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:20</td>
<td>Second presentation of chorus; section A (with repeat)</td>
<td>Jerry asks if children understand; song continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:37</td>
<td>Second presentation of section B</td>
<td>Jerry sings repeat of chorus in French, stumbling over words in second A section “I Got Daisies/In Green Pastures…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:56</td>
<td>Jerry reverts back to English for B section, and begins tap dancing during song</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63 Casper, 332.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28:10</td>
<td>Return of section A; vocal ends</td>
<td>Role reversal: Jerry calls out “I Got!” children respond with English words “rhythm…music…” All sing final line “Who could ask for anything more?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28:23</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Jerry introduces “le danse Americaine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28:31</td>
<td>First presentation of chorus from unseen orchestra; section A (w/ repeat)</td>
<td>Jerry introduces dances to kids “Time-step…shim-sham…Charleston”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28:48</td>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>Tap dance continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28:57</td>
<td>Return of section A</td>
<td>Jerry pretends to be “choo-choo train” in dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:07</td>
<td>Second orchestral presentation of chorus, section A (w/ repeat)</td>
<td>“soldier, Napoleon”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:22</td>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>“cowboy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:29</td>
<td>Return of section A</td>
<td>More energetic tap dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:39</td>
<td>Third presentation; section A (w/ repeat)</td>
<td>Alternating large gestures and small gestures in tap dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:54</td>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>Dance continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:00</td>
<td>Final return of A</td>
<td>Jerry shouts “aeroplane” and includes pinwheels in his dance down sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:08</td>
<td>Vocal Tag – “Who could ask for anything more?” and end of chorus</td>
<td>Jerry dances away down sidewalk, says goodbye to children - END</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The musical’s treatment of “I Got Rhythm” represents another feature of George Gershwin’s life. In the number, the American – Jerry – is educating the European community – in this case, the French children – about American culture, which Gershwin and other American songwriters of the day were doing when jazz-influenced music became popular in Europe. By the middle to late 1920s, Gershwin’s stage musicals and concert works were being performed for audiences in London and Paris. During his visits to Paris in 1927-28, he sought out the composers Maurice Ravel and Igor
Stravinsky, as well as noted composition teacher Nadia Boulanger, hoping to study composition with them. All three rejected his request, with the explanation that if he was to study with either of them, it would ruin the personal style he was already developing. In short, George Gershwin taught the European musical community about American music, and the “I Got Rhythm” number from the film reflects that. At the end of the number, there is another abrupt scene change to Milo Roberts’ hotel room; Jerry had accepted an invitation to meet her later that night.

Tra-La-La

The next musical number uses another rare Gershwin song, “Tra-La-La,” which was first introduced in the 1922 Broadway musical *For Goodness Sake*. The film presents this song as a duet between Adam and Jerry. Like “By Strauss,” the earlier musical number based on a rare song, the lyrics were re-written for the film by Ira Gershwin. However, unlike “By Strauss,” in which only a small part of the song was revised, the entire chorus was given a full re-write to fit with the context of the film plot, and this new version was given the subtitle “This Time it’s Really Love.” The lyrics used in the film are presented below:

**CHORUS I**

*JERRY: This time it’s really love, Tra-la-la-la,*  
*I’m in that blue above, Tra-la-la-la.*  
*She fills me full of joy, tell me papa,*  
*Am I not a lucky boy? Tra-la-la-la-la!*  
*Just listen to my heart go pitter-pat,*  
*It started from the start, I felt like that!*  
*Humming, strumming, singing, drumming*  
*What a thrill I’m getting from it!*  
*Tra-la-la, La-la-la, La!*
CHORUS II

This time it’s really love, Tra-la-la-la,
ADAM: To me you’re full of Blah-blah-blah!
JERRY: I’ve got le grande amour, dit toi, papa
ADAM: Cherchez la femme toujours, Ooh-la-la-la-la!
JERRY: She’s got but everything
ADAM: Is there a dowry?
JERRY: She’s like a breath of Spring
ADAM: Wow! You’ll be sow-ry!
JERRY: Humming, strumming, singing, drumming,
ADAM: Nothing good can happen from it!
BOTH: Tra-la-la, La-la-la, La!

At the start of the scene, Adam is sitting at the piano in his apartment composing. Jerry has returned home elated, after making his first date with Lise, and starts singing, unaware that his presence is annoying Adam. As shown by the lyrics above, the chorus is even longer than the “By Strauss” number. A chart showing the breakdown of this number is featured below.

### Table 3.4: Sequential Breakdown of “Tra-La-La”

- Featured performers: Gene Kelly (Jerry), Oscar Levant (Adam)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Chorus Section</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:46:24</td>
<td>N/A; scene leading up to number</td>
<td>Adam composing at piano; main tune is heard faintly in his playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:46:37</td>
<td>Jerry sings tune without words “Tra-la-la-la-la…”</td>
<td>Jerry is singing at the doorway between his and Adam’s apartments – Adam tries to drive him away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:46:45</td>
<td>Introduction of melody continues</td>
<td>Adam tries in vain one more time to drive Jerry away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:46:57</td>
<td>Jerry begins first chorus lyrics “This time it’s really love, tra-la-la-la…”</td>
<td>Adam reluctantly provides sparse piano accompaniment while Jerry sings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:47:15</td>
<td>Jerry continues with first chorus “Just listen to my heart go pitter-pat…”</td>
<td>Unseen orchestral accompaniment comes in under vocals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:47:34</td>
<td>Jerry and Adam sing second chorus</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“This time it’s really love, tra-la-la-la/To me you’re full of blah, blah, blah…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:47:52</td>
<td>Second half of chorus II “She’s got but everything/Is there a dowry…”</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:48:07</td>
<td>End of vocals; instrumental presentation of chorus I</td>
<td>Jerry begins tap dancing on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adam’s piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:48:24</td>
<td>Instrumental presentation of second half of chorus I</td>
<td>Jerry’s tap dance moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from top of piano to floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Adam is still providing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>piano accomp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:48:40</td>
<td>Orch. Presents first half of chorus II</td>
<td>Tap dance continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:49:09</td>
<td>Abrupt pause in music</td>
<td>Jerry and Adam interject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dialogue in rhythm (Rah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rah! Sis-boom-bah! Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>your partner with a Tra-la-la!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:49:12</td>
<td>Chorus II begins again, at a quicker tempo</td>
<td>Tap dance starts again, at a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>quicker tempo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:49:51</td>
<td>Lyrical Tag based on chorus II (“Humming, strumming, singing, drumming…”)</td>
<td>Jerry and Adam join</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>together at the piano for last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lyrical tag – END</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is one of the few numbers in the film that attempts to comment on a side of Gershwin’s private life; the composer was notorious for engaging in numerous romantic affairs with married women, yet was never married himself. By far the most intimate affair Gershwin had was with an actress named Paulette Goddard, who at the time was married to the actor Charlie Chaplin. The mood of “Tra-La-La” and Jerry’s elated emotions over meeting Lise may have been similar to Gershwin’s emotions during his relationship with Goddard. At the end of the number, the scene changes abruptly to show Lise and Henri having dinner together.
Love is Here to Stay

The next number is called “Love is Here to Stay,” and it features Jerry singing to Lise on the bank of the Seine. This is in fact the last song that George Gershwin wrote before his death in 1937. Edward Jablonski states that the chorus melody and a few bars of the verse were written by the composer, and that Ira Gershwin, Oscar Levant, and composer Vernon Duke finished the verse based on the little music that was there. The song was premiered in the Gershwin brothers’ last film musical, a revue titled *The Goldwyn Follies*, however it did not receive very much attention. Philip Furia states that it only featured one partial presentation of the song’s chorus, and then the music faded away behind dialogue. Years later, when the song was featured in the score of this film, Ira Gershwin felt its treatment was far better than in *The Goldwyn Follies*. In the film, only the chorus is presented.

CHORUS

*It’s very clear; our love is here to stay*

*Not for a year, forever and a day*

*The radio and the telephone and the movies that we know*

*May just be passing fancies, and in time may go, But oh, my dear, our love is here to stay*

*Together we’re going a long long way*

*In time the Rockies may crumble, Gibraltar may tumble, They’re only made of clay, but*

*Our love is here to stay.*

Furia goes on to state that the lyrics, “…and in time may go…” was the last phrase that George and Ira Gershwin wrote together. A chart for this number is presented below.

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65 Furia, 156.
66 Ibid.
Table 3.5: Sequential Breakdown of “Love is Here to Stay”

- Featured performers: Gene Kelly (Jerry), Leslie Caron (Lise)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Chorus Section</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:56:04</td>
<td>Jerry begins first half of chorus <em>a cappella</em>; unseen orchestral</td>
<td>Jerry and Lise are sitting on quay overlooking Seine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accompaniment moves in quietly “It’s very clear……and in time may go”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:56:47</td>
<td>Second half of chorus; orchestral accompaniment crescendos gradually</td>
<td>Song continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“But oh, my dear…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:57:44</td>
<td>End of vocals, orchestra presents melody</td>
<td><em>Pas de deux</em>&lt;sup&gt;67&lt;/sup&gt; begins between Jerry and Lise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:58:20</td>
<td>Second half of chorus presented in orchestra</td>
<td>Dance continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:58:52</td>
<td>Deceptive ending; solo horn begins full chorus again, melody is picked up</td>
<td>Dance continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by solo violin, then full orchestra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:59:52</td>
<td>Last line of chorus melody</td>
<td>Jerry and Lise end up in each other’s arms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presentation of “Love is Here to Stay” in this film was purely to remedy the mediocre treatment it had received in the original source. The song may have been given this treatment as a result of the composer’s early death. After the song was featured in *An American in Paris*, it achieved the recognition that the filmmakers believed it deserved. At the end of the number, Lise, rather panicked, asks Jerry, “What time is it?” and then runs off; she had promised Henri earlier that she would come to see his new show that same night.

(I’ll Build a) Stairway to Paradise

Immediately following is the only “production number,” or staged musical number, in the film.<sup>68</sup> Henri performs on stage in the style of the Folies Bergere; the

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<sup>67</sup> A pas de deux (French: ‘step of two’) is basically a dance between two partners.
song is titled “(I’ll Build a) Stairway to Paradise,” which was originally written for the 1922 edition of the annual stage revue, *George White’s Scandals*. After the song’s appearance in the *Scandals*, it became a popular hit. In the film, since he is performing for a Parisian audience, Henri presents the first half of the verse in French. He spots an acquaintance in the audience, an American concert producer, and stops singing to greet him. Afterward, Henri sings the rest of the song in English.

VERSE
All you preachers
Who delight in panning the dancing teachers,
Let me tell you there are a lot of features
Of the dance that carry you through
The gates of Heaven

It’s madness
To be always sitting around in sadness
When you could be learning the Steps of Gladness
(You’ll be happy when you can do
Just six or seven.)

Begin today. You’ll find it nice:
The quickest way to Paradise
When you practice
Here’s the thing to know-
Simply say as you go:

CHORUS
I’ll Build a Stairway to Paradise,
With a new step every day
I’m going to get there at any price
Stand aside, I’m on my way!
I got the blues, and up above it’s so fair;
Shoes, go on and carry me there!
I’ll build a stairway to Paradise,
With a new step every day.

Fordin, 313.
Gershwin, 296.
In the number, this part of the verse is presented in French.
In the number, Henri presents the verse and chorus together, followed by a second presentation of the chorus. A large staircase is constructed on the stage behind Henri, and each step lights up when he ascends. A chart showing the breakdown of this sequence is shown below.

**Table 3.6: Sequential Breakdown of “(I'll Build a) Stairway to Paradise”**
- Featured performer: Georges Guetary (Henri)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Song Section</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00:27</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Orchestral fanfare; Henri appears on stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00:30</td>
<td>Henri presents first half of verse – in French</td>
<td>Audience members greet Henri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00:48</td>
<td>Abrupt pause</td>
<td>Henri greets acquaintance in the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00:56</td>
<td>Henri continues with second half of verse – in English “It’s madness/to be always sitting around…”</td>
<td>Curtain opens behind Henri, revealing large staircase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:01:30</td>
<td>Chorus begins “I’ll build a stairway to Paradise…”</td>
<td>Henri begins climbing staircase (each step lighting up as he steps), chorus girls appear behind him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:02:06</td>
<td>Second presentation of chorus</td>
<td>Chorus girls descend stairs, lights also reveal chorus girls dressed as stationary candelabras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:02:45</td>
<td>Lyrical Tag “With a new step every day.”</td>
<td>Henri and chorus girls pose on staircase together – END</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The treatment of this song is a comment on Gershwin’s career in that it parallels its original source. “Stairway to Paradise” was originally written for a stage revue – George White’s *Scandals* show – and in the film, it is being performed in a revue setting.
The use of the staircase in the number was a continuation of a popular method of showcasing dancers in Hollywood musicals.

Concerto in F

The next number, and the second of the three non-vocal fantasy sequences in the movie, is the third movement of the *Concerto in F*, a concert piece for piano and orchestra originally written by Gershwin in 1925. As already stated in the composer biography in the previous chapter, *Concerto in F* was the first concert piece that was orchestrated solely by Gershwin; the composer’s earlier concert piece, 1924’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, was orchestrated by Ferde Grofé. The scene leading up to the number takes place in Adam’s apartment; Jerry and Adam are discussing Jerry’s rich art sponsor, and Adam insinuates that she is interested in more than just his artwork. Jerry denies this, but he seems unsure. Jerry then leaves to meet his patroness, and Adam is by himself in his apartment, daydreaming.

The third movement of the concerto is in Rondo form; one piano theme consistently recurs in alternation with contrasting thematic material that unites this movement. The next chart, which is shown below, will highlight the recurrence of the main theme – labeled ‘Motive A’ along with the film action.

### Table 3.7: Sequential breakdown of “Concerto in F, 3rd movement”

*Featured performer: Oscar Levant (Adam)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Recurrence of Concerto Motive</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:05:33</td>
<td>After faint “orchestral tuning-up” sounds are heard, Motive A is presented by the piano</td>
<td>Adam is lying on his bed, daydreaming; scene dissolves into fantasy concert-hall setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:05:47</td>
<td>Piano continues Motive A, accented by</td>
<td>Adam is seen as concert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Detail Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:06:42</td>
<td>Motive A continues</td>
<td>Camera zooms out to reveal rest of orchestra and conductor, half hidden by shadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:06:56</td>
<td>Orchestra presents new music</td>
<td>Upon stepping out of shadow, the conductor is revealed to be Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:07:12</td>
<td>Motive A comes back in piano</td>
<td>Adam at piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:07:15</td>
<td>New music played by violins</td>
<td>A row of violinists are shown, and they are all Adam; shots continue to shift between Adam the pianist and Adam the conductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:07:44</td>
<td>Motive A in piano, new music occurs in percussion</td>
<td>Shifting from piano to conductor; percussionist is seen next (also Adam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:08:40</td>
<td>Motive A in full orchestra</td>
<td>More shifting views from pianist to conductor; shot of gong being sounded (by Adam), back to conductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:09:26</td>
<td>Last occurrence of Motive A</td>
<td>More shifting views from pianist to conductor; timpanist is also seen (Adam again)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:09:57</td>
<td>End of Piece</td>
<td>Unseen audience applause begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10:09</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Adam the pianist shakes hands with Adam the conductor as rest of orchestra applaud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10:11</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Adam appears in the audience and begins applauding and shouting “Bravo!” – END</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This “Ego Fantasy” is a visual comment on Gershwin’s compositional career; as Adam is shown playing all the parts of the concerto – piano and orchestra – he represents Gershwin’s first attempt at writing all the parts of the same piece. At the end of the
number, the scene dissolves back into reality, leaving Adam where he was before at the
start of the number – alone in his apartment.

S’Wonderful

The last musical number before the ballet finale is titled “S’Wonderful,”
originally written in 1927 for the Broadway musical *Funny Face*. In the scene before the
number, Jerry is expressing his frustrations to Adam in developing his relationship with
Lise, while at the same time keeping his obligations with Milo. Henri shows up to share
his good news with the two: he is getting married and moving to America to further his
stage career. Adam realizes then that Jerry and Henri are both in love with Lise, and he is
sitting between the two, silently panicking and hoping that they don’t discover it
themselves. Jerry explains his romantic dilemma to Henri – conveniently leaving out
Lise’s name in the process – and asks for his advice. Henri simply advises Jerry to be
honest with the girl he loves, and tell her outright that he is in love with her. This advice
makes Jerry feel much more at ease. The chorus is in AABA form, the same as the song
“I Got Rhythm,” and the lyrics are presented below:

CHORUS
S’wonderful, S’marvelous,
She should care for me,
S’awful nice, S’paradise,
S’what I love to see,
She’s made my life so glamorous,
You can’t blame me for being amorous,
S’wonderful, s’marvelous,
That she should care for me.
After the first presentation of the chorus, there is a small dance interlude, with Jerry tap dancing, while Henri hums and whistles the “S’Wonderful” tune. After the dance interlude there is a lyrical tag, where the tail end of the chorus is presented with new French lyrics: “S’wonderful…S’exceptionel/S’why I fell…S’magnifique/S’what I seek…S’elegant/S’what I want…” Grammatically, Ira Gershwin shortened the French article “c’est” for this song in the same way that the English article “it’s” was shortened in the original. A chart showing the breakdown of the number is shown below.

**Table 3.8: Sequential Breakdown of “S’Wonderful”**

- Featured performers: Gene Kelly (Jerry), Georges Guetary (Henri)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Song Section</th>
<th>Film Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:20:29</td>
<td>First presentation of chorus; Section A</td>
<td>Jerry and Henri begin song sitting at table with Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“S’wonderful/s’marvelous…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20:42</td>
<td>Repeat of A melody “s’awful nice/s’paradise…”</td>
<td>Song continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20:56</td>
<td>Section B of chorus “She’s made my life so glamorous…”</td>
<td>Song continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:21:07</td>
<td>Back to A melody for end of first presentation “…that she should care for me.”</td>
<td>Henri and Jerry leave table to walk down street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:21:21</td>
<td>Second full presentation of chorus “S’wonderful/s’marvelous…”</td>
<td>Song continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:22:12</td>
<td>Instrumental presentation of chorus (A, B melodies hummed and/or whistled)</td>
<td>Jerry begins tap dancing, Henri watches, leaning on a post and whistling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:22:45</td>
<td>Lyrical Tag with new French lyrics “S’wonderful…s’exceptionel/s’why I fell…”</td>
<td>Jerry leaves Henri to meet Lise; the two are still singing lyrics as they separate – END</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This number is also a comment on Gershwin’s private romantic affairs. The irony of Jerry and Henri singing about the same woman is more significant; these two
characters are, in a sense, sharing the same woman. Gershwin’s situation is somewhat similar, in that he often had to share his lover with her husband. At the end of this number, there is an abrupt scene change, and Jerry is seen exiting a taxi, happily running to meet Lise at the bank of the Seine, and tell her that he loves her.

The American in Paris Ballet

The last number, and ultimately the main focal point, of the film is the American in Paris Ballet, the third and final non-vocal fantasy sequence. As stated in the last chapter, An American in Paris was originally written in 1928 for the concert stage. The preceding scenes are incredibly important, as they set up the impetus for this large-scale dance number. During the scene at the Beaux Arts Ball, Jerry and Lise have shared their final goodbyes; Lise is leaving to marry Henri. During their final scene together, Jerry has sketched a drawing of the entrance gates of the Place de la Concorde. The following is a portion of Jerry’s and Lise’s final words to each other:

JERRY: I came to Paris to study and to paint because Utrillo did, and [Toulouse] Lautrec did, and Roualt did. I loved what they created, and I thought something would happen to me, too. Well, it happened all right. Now what have I got left? Paris. Maybe that's enough for some but it isn't for me anymore because the more beautiful everything is, the more it will hurt without you.

LISE: Jerry, don't let me leave you this way.

The above conversation is not only the two lovers’ final words for each other; it is also the final segment of dialogue for the entire film. During his speech, Jerry rips his charcoal drawing in half and discards it. He sadly watches Lise leave the Beaux Arts Ball with Henri. Jerry’s emotional distress leads him to fantasize about his artistic
influences, his experiences in Paris, and ultimately about meeting and eventually losing Lise. The visual transition into the fantasy world of the ballet involves the torn drawing; the two pieces are shown caught by the breeze, and then coming together to become whole again. Jerry, as one of the main participants in the ballet, materializes into his own drawing; on the ground in front of him is a red rose, which was held by Lise in an earlier scene. This rose is intended to signify Lise; in the ballet sequences in which she appears, she will be holding this rose. The main plot of the ballet involves Jerry wandering through Paris and searching for Lise.

A chart showing the breakdown of the different scenes is featured here, with the film action displayed in the final column. Using measure numbers from the published score, the third column of the chart shows the original location of the different musical themes.

Table 3.9: Sequential breakdown of the American in Paris Ballet

- Featured performers: Gene Kelly (Jerry), Leslie Caron (Lise)
- Secondary performers: Various ballet characters (Pompiers [firefighters], Furies, American Servicemen, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Theme fragment(^{71})</th>
<th>Location in original piece</th>
<th>Plot/Ballet sequence (style of painter)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:35:26</td>
<td>Newly-composed bass line, accented by fragment, leads to fanfare</td>
<td>The fragment that this music is based on first appears in mm. 201-202</td>
<td>Black-and-white charcoal sketch of entrance to Place de la Concorde; Jerry appears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35:42</td>
<td>Newly re-orchestrated fanfare created with music from original piece</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Streaks of color splash across charcoal sketch background, Jerry encounters Furies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{71}\) See chapter 2 for a guide to the themes of the concert piece *An American in Paris.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:36:00</td>
<td>First Walking Theme</td>
<td>First theme of composition, mm. 1-95 (strings)</td>
<td><strong>First sequence</strong> (Dufy); setting is Place de la Concorde fountain, Jerry encounters Parisian citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:37:28</td>
<td>Quotation of French march tune, “La Sorella,” is heard twice</td>
<td>mm. 96-102, (trombones)</td>
<td>First sequence continued; “Pompier” characters appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:37:42</td>
<td>Continuation of First Theme, hinting at Second Walking Theme</td>
<td>mm. 103-118, jumps abruptly to mm. 195-202</td>
<td>Set lighting darkens abruptly, gives impression that Jerry is being targeted by WWII air raid; First appearance of Lise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:39:00</td>
<td>English horn elaborates first walking theme</td>
<td>mm. 204-210, theme passes to oboe at m. 211, continues to m. 220</td>
<td><strong>Second sequence</strong> (Renoir); flower market setting, Jerry encounters red rose among basket of other flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:40:05</td>
<td>Violin solo answer passage from original piece</td>
<td>Beginning with celesta at m. 361, continuing roughly to m. 391</td>
<td>Second sequence continued; solo dance between Jerry and Lise, dissolves into next sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:41:14</td>
<td>Newly re-orchestrated section based on themes from original piece</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><strong>Transitional Sequence</strong> – Back alley scene (Utrillo); at first Jerry is alone, then four “American-servicemen” characters enter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:41:50</td>
<td>Second quotation of “La Sorella”</td>
<td>mm. 96-102 (trombones)</td>
<td><strong>Third Sequence</strong> (Rousseau); return of “Pompiers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:42:09</td>
<td>Overlapping Themes – “La</td>
<td>mm. 96-102, mm. 604-610</td>
<td>Third Sequence continued; Lise and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Flute Solo</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:42:47</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Second Theme</td>
<td>Third sequence continued; group dance by Lise and female dancers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>mm. 119-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>(clarinets)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:43:23</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>First Theme of</td>
<td>Third sequence; Cohan-inspired tap dance by Jerry and “American servicemen”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>composition mm. 1-95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:44:10</td>
<td>Revised</td>
<td>mm. 392-</td>
<td>Jerry continues tap dance with Lise, entire company joins in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>orchestration</td>
<td>(trumpet solo, theme passes to strings and winds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45:49</td>
<td>Homesick</td>
<td>mm. 249-</td>
<td>Fourth sequence (Dufy); Setting is the Place de la Concorde fountain, solo dance between Jerry and Lise – no other ballet characters are present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blues</td>
<td>(horns)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:48:05</td>
<td>“Left Bank”</td>
<td>mm. 482-560</td>
<td>Fifth sequence (Van Gogh); setting is the Place de l’Opera – Jerry and Lise enjoy Parisian nightlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>(main theme in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trumpets), this is the only theme from the composition that is presented in its entirety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:49:11</td>
<td>“Jazz”</td>
<td>mm. 482-560</td>
<td>Sixth sequence (Toulouse-Lautrec); Setting is the Moulin Rouge – in a re-creation of the portrait Chocolat, Jerry becomes Chocolat, Lise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>(followed by transitional material alluding to First Theme)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

In what may have been a risky move for the filmmakers, the transitions into and out of this large finale contained no dialogue, and the ballet itself contained no singing or spoken dialogue whatsoever. Because of the lack of spoken dialogue, the film audience was able to recognize the different painting styles on their own, with no guidance to tell them otherwise.

The conception of the American in Paris Ballet has a long history. Biographer William Hyland notes that in 1929, a ballet sequence danced to the original tone poem was incorporated into a stage show called *Show Girl*, produced by Florenz Ziegfeld. In 1937, just prior to his death, Gershwin was hired to write the score for the film musical *The Goldwyn Follies*; Joan Peyser says he was attracted to the job for the specific reason

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74 Hyland, 130.
that the film would include a ballet, choreographed by George Balanchine, set to a new composition by Gershwin. Unfortunately, the symptoms that eventually led to the composer’s fatal brain tumor increased, and Gershwin could only offer the rights to *An American in Paris* as a free gift to producer Sam Goldwyn for this planned ballet. For unknown reasons, the ballet was never produced.\(^7\) The American in Paris Ballet in this musical, conceived and produced approximately 15 years after these events, was a realization of what Gershwin could have helped create for *The Goldwyn Follies* had he lived long enough to see it through.

One sequence in the ballet bears a striking resemblance to notes Gershwin made in the process of writing the tone poem. In the original piece, there is a section including a violin solo answered by an oboe; in the published score this passage appears starting at measure 361. In his original piano score, roughly around the same section of the piece, Gershwin had written these notes in the margins:

```
Sees Girl
Meets Girl
Back to 2/4 – Strolling Flirtation
Into Café
Mix Love Theme with 2/4
Conversation leading to Slow Blues\(^6\)
```

It is not mentioned in any source whether or not Kelly, Chaplin, Green, or any of the rest of the film’s crew, knew of Gershwin’s notes. Still, one sequence – the Renoir-inspired sequence in the flower market – seems to be almost a realization of these notes.


At the end of this climactic dance scene, the film-going audience was treated to the standard happy ending, with Jerry and Lise reuniting.

The precedent for including elaborate ballets – as opposed to standard song-and-dance numbers, which were always popular – in film musicals was established with the American in Paris Ballet. The ‘catalogue’ musicals Singin’ in the Rain (1952) and The Band Wagon (1953) also featured large-scale ballet scenes, most likely inspired by An American in Paris. The ballet scenes that came later functioned in the same manner as in An American in Paris; they featured an elaborate story which was conveyed through dance, with little to no dialogue, and accompanied by re-orchestrated previously composed music. However, the American in Paris Ballet is unique among these later scenes in that it also commented on the history of the music that it featured.

77 Genné, 345-346.
CHAPTER 4: COMPARING THE BALLET TO THE ORIGINAL TONE POEM

Changes Made for the Ballet Music

As shown by the analysis in the previous chapter, the version of *An American in Paris* that was used as the accompaniment to the film ballet finale is audibly different from the original concert piece. The differences that were most prominent when listening and studying the ballet itself were the new placements of many of the essential musical themes. These themes also appear in the incidental score heard throughout the rest of the film.

The themes that Saul Chaplin rearranged in the ballet were the “Homesick Blues” and “Jazz” themes, and most prominently, the “Left Bank” theme. In the published score of the original tone poem the “Left Bank” theme appears in measures 249-321, before the “Homesick Blues,” which comes in at m. 396. In the film, the “Left Bank” sequence – the Van Gogh sequence in the ballet – is instead placed after the sequence accompanied by the “Blues” music. Second, the placement of the “Jazz” music – the Toulouse-Lautrec sequence – is immediately following the “Left Bank” music; the concert piece features the “Jazz” theme following the “Blues.” Chaplin attempted to explain the reasons for the changes made to the tone poem:

One reason why we [the musical directors] had to do [the adaptation] was because we did one painter at a time…another piece of music fit with Toulouse-Lautrec, like *Chocolat*, the jazz theme…Well, that comes early in the music, but we couldn’t have Toulouse-Lautrec up early and then come back to him at the end, so
that’s one reason why the ballet music was changed to fit the needs of the separate dramatic sections.\textsuperscript{78}

The music that is heard most often in the film’s incidental score is the “First Walking Theme,” which is the theme that opens the original tone poem. For the ballet, Chaplin arranged this theme for the Raoul Dufy sequences at the beginning and end; it was also used briefly – in a re-orchestrated form – for Gene Kelly’s tap dance during the Henri Rousseau sequence. Chaplin mentions that “We did Dufy first, and we decided certain things fit with Dufy.”\textsuperscript{79} In short, Chaplin was convinced that this “First Walking Theme” was the best music to accompany the Dufy-inspired sequence.

The “Homesick Blues” theme is the second most prevalent theme in the incidental score; however it is not as prevalent in the ballet, where only about two minutes is devoted to this music. In the ballet, this theme also accompanies a Dufy-inspired sequence: the solo dance around the Place de la Concorde fountain. In the original tone poem, the “Homesick Blues” has a much larger presence; in the published score it is first presented in bar 396, and there are several full and partial statements from that point on until the end of the piece.

Discarded Film Footage and Music

Many Gershwin songs were selected as musical numbers for this film, however not all of them were used. Four additional songs were planned as musical numbers, and


\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
the creators of the musical went so far as to have the individual actors record the songs and shoot the film footage for these numbers. They were eventually edited out of the final film primarily because it was running too long.

I’ve Got a Crush on You

The first number was the song “I’ve Got a Crush on You,” originally written in 1928 and used for two different Broadway musicals: Treasure Girl (1928) and Strike Up the Band (1930). The planned film footage involved Gene Kelly, as Jerry, singing the song and dancing alone in his apartment. Kelly remarked later that “I’ve Got a Crush on You” was one of his favorite Gershwin songs, and he had worked harder rehearsing the choreography for this particular number than his famous dance number from Singin’ in the Rain, and he was very disappointed to see it cut out.80

Love Walked In and But Not For Me

Two of Georges Guetary’s planned numbers were deleted from the final release. One was the song “Love Walked In,” written in 1937 for The Goldwyn Follies, the Gershwin brothers’ last film musical. Ira Gershwin considered “Love Walked In” to have the weakest lyrics he’d ever written. Still, despite the weak lyrics, “Love Walked In” received a lot of attention in the original source, much more than another better-known song that was featured in the same musical, “Love is Here to Stay.” The footage for this planned number would have featured Guetary, as Henri, singing to Lise (Leslie Caron). Another of Guetary’s numbers that had been deleted was the song “But Not For

80 Ibid.
Me,” from the 1930 hit stage show *Girl Crazy.* The number was to take place near the end of the Beaux Arts Ball scene, where he would sing this to himself.

**Nice Work if You Can Get It**

An additional number was planned for Guetary near the beginning of the musical. The vocal track for this number was recorded, but the idea for the scene was discarded before any film footage could be shot; the song was “Nice Work if You Can Get It,” originally from the 1937 film musical *A Damsel in Distress.* The basis for this number was to establish the friendship between Adam (Oscar Levant) and Henri (Guetary). In the beginning of the film, it is discovered that Adam once worked as Henri’s accompanist, and this number, planned as a flashback sequence, would demonstrate their past working relationship. This number would have taken place early in the film, before the “Embraceable You” sequence. One reason why this particular number was scrapped is because the filmmakers believed that featuring a number so early in the film that did not feature either Gene Kelly or Leslie Caron – the film’s major stars – was not a good idea. However, a fragment of this deleted song is heard in the incidental scoring, and Henri sings a small portion of “Nice Work if You Can Get It” in an early scene, when he first meets up with Adam.

**Incidental Fragments as Leitmotivs**

Peter Larsen has noted that film composers often wrote musical passages to describe particular moods in silent films, and he called these passages leitmotivs,
borrowing the term from opera composer Richard Wagner.\textsuperscript{81} The practice of writing leitmotifs continued after films transitioned to sound, and they are prevalent even in this film musical. However, the musical fragments that act as leitmotifs in this film – and in many other films of this era – are not true leitmotifs in the manner that they were first employed, in Wagner’s operas. In film scores, these individual fragments of music can only be considered true Wagnerian leitmotifs if they are consistently sounded whenever a specific action takes place or a specific character appears. However, for the purposes of this study I will refer to the musical passages from this film as partial leitmotifs.

In the film \textit{An American in Paris}, the “First Walking Theme” of the tone poem acts as a partial leitmotiv in some of the scenes where the lead character, Jerry, is present. The “First Walking Theme” is the most identifiable theme from the concert piece, and the musical directors must have thought that it made sense to associate the lead character with the most identifiable theme. Another partial leitmotiv, a fragment of the song “Love is Here to Stay,” is often featured in scenes with the lead romantic couple, Jerry and Lise. This song’s association with these characters is established by several scenes in the film; the first being from the scene in the Café Flodair nightclub, where a fragment of the song is heard as underscoring when the two first meet, and the second is the musical number that employs the song, where the two dance on the quay of the river Seine. The leitmotiv, now fully established, is employed a third time during the painting montage in the middle of the film; Jerry and Lise are together in one of the scenes in this montage, and the song is heard once more. The supporting character of Henri has his own partial leitmotiv as

\textsuperscript{81} Peter Larsen, \textit{Film Music} (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 70.
well, in the song “Nice Work if You Can Get It.” It is first heard at the beginning of the film, where he sings a small portion of it, thus establishing it as his leitmotiv. It is heard once more in the incidental scoring near the end of the film. The other supporting characters, Adam and Milo, are not associated with any particular leitmotivs.

Incidental Music – Musical Montages

The three montages featured in the film match on-screen action with incidental music to effectively advance the dramatic conflict. Montages usually contain brief related scenes or images cut together. These next paragraphs discuss the on-screen action that occurs, as well as what is heard, during these montages.

The first sequence involves three different voice-overs, and can be read as a montage. It occurs at the very beginning; its purpose is to set the scene of the story that is to come. After the opening titles, the incidental music that is first heard is made up of themes from the title composition, particularly the First Walking and “Left Bank” themes. The on-screen action that occurs is one long sweeping view of the entire city. The music fades slightly to incorporate a voice-over, which begins: “This is Paris. And I’m an American who lives here. My name’s Jerry Mulligan…” Jerry’s voice-over continues to explain who he is, what he does for a living, where he lives, and how he’s made friends in this city. According to Jerry’s voice-over, he lives over on the Left Bank, which he indicates, while an arrangement of the “Left Bank” theme from the tone poem is heard. After the mention of friends, a second voice-over begins: “And I’m one of them. Adam Cook is my name…” Adam’s voice-over, which is accompanied by his
own piano playing, serves to introduce this supporting character by saying what he does, how he came to Paris, and who his friends are. The voice-over also mentions another character – Henri Baurel – with whom Adam is acquainted. Adam addresses the film audience, through voice-over, and asks “you remember him, don’t you?” At this, the point-of-view shifts to a third voice-over – Henri’s: “I [remember him], because that’s me…” At the end of this voice-over, the main action begins. The incidental scoring still continues underneath each of these three voices. Because of this sequence and these three voice-overs, the film audience is already introduced to three major characters, and the location in which the entire film is to take place.

The second montage takes place after the musical number, “By Strauss.” The film action shows Jerry walking down the street towards Montmartre, where he plans to set up and sell his paintings on the street. The music that accompanies him is the First Walking Theme. As Jerry is walking, he admires the abstract art of a street artist, greets another who is arguing with a policeman, and even walks by a third who bears a strong resemblance to Winston Churchill, a scene that, according to Hugh Fordin, was specially conceived by producer Arthur Freed for comedic effect.\(^\text{82}\) At this last scene, Jerry does a double-take, and the music does the same. The “musical double-take” is a good example of “mickeymousing,” where the music mirrors the film action exactly. The film action and complementary music of this street montage elaborates on Jerry’s artist background for the audience.

The third and final montage takes place late in the film, and is referred to as the “painting montage.” The incidental music here begins with an arrangement of the song “Tra-La-La.” In the preceding scene, Jerry has just heard from his sponsor that she has arranged for an exhibit of his artwork to take place in three months, therefore he has to hurry and paint more portraits for this exhibit. The images of this montage involve Jerry painting various Parisian landmarks, a child with a toy, and a portrait of Lise holding a red rose; at this point, the incidental music changes to the song “Love is Here to Stay.” After this moment, the music shifts back to “Tra-La-La” to finish out the montage scenes. It ends with Jerry standing among his new paintings. The purpose of this montage was to indicate the passage of time as Jerry works hard to prepare for his exhibit; it also indicates the relationship that is developing between him and Lise.

The practices involved in scoring a film are most evident in the incidental score. Special tactics, such as leitmotivs, and the technique of “mickeymousing,” are used to provide important musical cues in *An American in Paris*. In cases such as the above montages, the incidental music seems to enhance the meaning behind the musical numbers that previously occurred.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the film *An American in Paris* was a success. The ballet finale may have made some audiences develop an interest in the original tone poem; people who saw the film subsequently heard this music with the film ballet in their minds, and many of them in turn went out to find recordings of the piece in its original form. This chapter will focus on other features of the film, as well as its cultural impact, other issues that can be drawn from the plot, and how the entire production can be considered part of the composer’s career, despite the fact that it occurred approximately fifteen years after his death.

The study of the musical numbers demonstrates how the film *An American in Paris* used the Gershwin catalog of concert pieces, popular well-known songs, and rare unknown songs to create a retrospective of the composer’s life and career. The retrospective was achieved through dramatic realizations or broad connections between the on-screen action and events in the life of the composer. This retrospective is not chronological, as shown by the placement of “By Strauss,” which, career-wise, was a late song, but was placed early in the film, and “I Got Rhythm,” a song that was written earlier than “By Strauss,” but placed later. The earliest composition in the entire film is the song “(I’ll Build a) Stairway to Paradise,” which dates back to 1922; this number is placed late in the musical.

William Hyland was an important source when studying the cultural impact of the composer’s legacy. In his biography, particularly in the section entitled “Keeping The Flame,” he discusses the film as one of the many efforts in keeping George Gershwin’s
legacy alive, especially the practice of film studios using and re-using much of his music for their films. The fact that Hollywood, and not Broadway, utilized Gershwin’s music more during this time is “ironic,” according to Hyland, seeing as how during his life, the composer’s presence was much larger on Broadway than in Hollywood. 

The absence of music from *Porgy and Bess*, Gershwin’s “folk opera,” merits discussion. Songs from the opera were very popular at the time this film was made, yet they do not appear in *An American in Paris* as either musical numbers or in the incidental scoring. As stated before in Chapter 3, musical director Saul Chaplin selected songs that were “typically Gershwin” – songs that were not originally major hits, but not completely unknown numbers – for the film. Neither Chaplin’s memoirs nor any other source that documents the film’s history explains why the *Porgy and Bess* music was not considered. There is one possible reason as to why the opera’s songs were not considered; the film’s screenwriter, Alan Jay Lerner, specifically wrote a script where the numbers would be featured as a result of the dramatic action. Songs such as “Summertime” or “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” were so closely identified with the story of *Porgy and Bess* that they would not fit with the drama of Lerner’s original story. Neither would they contribute to the indirect biography of the composer that lies underneath the film plot.

One unsettling fact about this film is the absence of minorities featured in supporting roles or as extras. This fact may or may not be coincidental with the absence of the music from *Porgy and Bess*, an opera with an African-American cast. The film’s entire cast, including extras, is Caucasian. The only hint to any minorities in the film is

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in the scene in the Café Flodair nightclub, where Jerry and Lise, the two romantic leads, first meet. In this scene a jazz band, with African-American musicians, is briefly featured. Very few musicals produced during the 1950s and earlier had African-American actors, and when they appeared it was typically in supporting roles, or as extras. It was expected that the supporting roles played by minority characters would be stereotypical depictions of their respective ethnicities. The fact that this musical had no minority characters may be explained as just a standard practice of the period.

As stated in Chapter 1, the film was highly praised when it was released in 1951. Considering all the acclaim that the film received, it is no surprise that this film’s popularity has survived to the present day. One of the main reasons for this lies with the music. Gershwin’s songs have maintained their popularity through the various covers by jazz and pop artists. The title composition has also survived both in its abridged and original forms; in its original form, *An American in Paris* is a staple of the repertoires of many symphony orchestras. In the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, George Gershwin and other American musicians of his day influenced the general public to view America as a haven for musical growth, similar to the influence that the Impressionist painters had in their portrayals of the city of Paris as a haven for visual art. Gershwin is also unique in that he is remembered both as a popular songwriter, alongside Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, and as a serious composer, together with Aaron Copland and Charles Ives. The filmmaking team of *An American in Paris* projected a retelling of Gershwin’s unique career onto the artistic styles of the Impressionist painters to essentially display all of the innovations in art, film, and music that had occurred up until that point in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.
### APPENDIX A: LIST OF MUSICAL NUMBERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN THE FILM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Song/Musical Number</th>
<th>Accompanying film action/characters involved</th>
<th>Original Source of Song/Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:10:06</td>
<td>“Embraceable You” (non-vocal) *Orchestration by Skip Martin</td>
<td>Fantasy dance scene introducing female lead Lise (Leslie Caron)</td>
<td>Originally written 1928 for a show called <em>East is West</em> but not used, interpolated into Broadway musical <em>Girl Crazy</em> (1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:14:26</td>
<td>“By Strauss”</td>
<td>Introduction of three male leads – Jerry, Adam, Henri (Gene Kelly, Oscar Levant, Georges Guetary, respectively)</td>
<td>Broadway revue <em>The Show is On</em> (1936); new lyrics added for film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:26:44</td>
<td>“I Got Rhythm” *Orchestration by Skip Martin</td>
<td>Jerry sings with chorus of French children</td>
<td>Broadway musical <em>Girl Crazy</em> (1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:46:26</td>
<td>“Tra-La-La”</td>
<td>Jerry and Adam duet in Adam’s apartment</td>
<td>Broadway musical <em>For Goodness Sake</em> (1922); new lyrics written specifically for film **original lyrics by Arthur Francis (early pseudonym used by Ira Gershwin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:56:03</td>
<td>“Love is Here to Stay”</td>
<td>Jerry sings to Lise on bank of Seine river</td>
<td>Hollywood film musical revue <em>The Goldwyn Follies</em> (1937)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00:26</td>
<td>“(I’ll Build a) Stairway to Paradise”</td>
<td>Henri performs in music-hall setting, half in French, half in English</td>
<td>Annual stage revue <em>George White’s Scandals of 1922</em> **lyrics by Arthur Francis (Ira Gershwin) and B.G. DeSylva, additional French lyrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Song</td>
<td>Original Source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:05:33</td>
<td>“Concerto in F, 3rd movement” (non-vocal) *Orchestration by George Gershwin</td>
<td>“Ego Fantasy;” Adam performs as solo pianist, conductor, and other orchestra members 1925 Concert piece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20:29</td>
<td>“S’Wonderful”</td>
<td>Henri and Jerry sing about joys of being in love Broadway musical Funny Face (1927); new French lyrics added for film</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Embraceable You” Lyrics:

CHORUS
Embrace me, my sweet embraceable you
Embrace me, you irreplaceable you
Just one look at you my heart grew tipsy in me
You and you alone bring out the gypsy in me

I love all the many charms about you
Above all I want my arms about you
Don’t be a naughty baby...
Come to papa come to papa do
My sweet embraceable you...

Deleted Songs/Musical Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Original Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Love Walked In”</td>
<td>Originally written 1930, lyrics were not added until 1937 for film musical The Goldwyn Follies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’ve Got a Crush on You”</td>
<td>Used in two different Broadway musicals: Treasure Girl (1928) and Strike up the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84 George Feltenstein, Liner Notes for An American in Paris: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack, 40.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Description</th>
<th>Film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“But Not For Me”</td>
<td><em>Band</em> (1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nice Work if You Can Get It” (vocal fragment at 0:07:27)</td>
<td><em>Girl Crazy</em> (1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Film musical <em>A Damsel in Distress</em> (1937)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Songs (not already mentioned above) used as incidental scoring:

- “I Don’t Think I’ll Fall in Love Today”
- “Someone to Watch Over Me”
- “Bidin’ My Time”
- “Liza”
- “Do, Do, Do”
- “Strike Up the Band”
- “Oh Lady, Be Good!”
APPENDIX B: SYNOPSIS OF THE FILM AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

The setting is Paris, France, post-World War II.

The film begins with establishing shots of Parisian landmarks such as the Place de la Concorde, among others, and a voice-over narration from the main character: “This is Paris. And I’m an American who lives here…” Jerry Mulligan, a former GI, left the Army at the end of the Second World War to study painting in the French capital. He lives on the Left Bank of the Seine, in a cramped apartment above the Café Huguette. Jerry’s friend Adam Cook, an American concert pianist living in Paris on a study-abroad scholarship, has an apartment in the same building. Adam introduces himself through narration as well, and mentions that he once worked as an accompanist for a French music-hall entertainer named Henri Baurel, who also introduces himself through a third voice-over. In Henri’s narration, he implies that he is a slightly older gentleman, but he does not specify what his age is; his final words on the matter are “…let’s just say I am old enough to know what to do about my young feelings.”

Henri and Adam meet at the Café Huguette, and Henri begins speaking enthusiastically about his new fiancée, Lise Bouvier, a nineteen-year-old shop-girl. During the war, Lise lived in Henri’s house as his ward. As she grew up, the two of them fell in love. Henri’s passionate descriptions of Lise lead to a fantasy sequence (“Embraceable You”), which visually comments on each aspect that he describes. However, these descriptions contradict one another, and at the end of this sequence, Adam is still confused.
Jerry comes down to the café to meet Adam, who in turn introduces him to Henri. The three of them engage in musical clowning (“By Strauss”) to the delight of the other café patrons.

Jerry walks off to sell his paintings in the Montmartre district. After a rude exchange with a female college student critiquing his work, Jerry meets Milo Roberts, a wealthy American suntan-oil heiress. Milo buys two of Jerry’s paintings, and seeing that she doesn’t have enough to pay him there, invites him back to her hotel to pay him. She invites him to come back later that night for a small party she is having, and he accepts. Jerry gets a ride back to his neighborhood from Milo’s limousine driver, where he is welcomed by a large group of children he had befriended, who then beg him to teach them English words. Jerry does, by use of song and dance (“I Got Rhythm”).

Jerry returns to Milo’s hotel later, only to find that the little party she had arranged is just the two of them. Jerry gives Milo back her money for the paintings, assuming that she wants him as a paid escort, and tells her he wants no part of that kind of arrangement. Milo asserts that she is only interested in Jerry’s painting skill and she would like to get to know him better. Jerry is slightly relieved by this explanation, and the two of them go out to Café Flodair, a crowded jazz nightclub. There, Milo tells Jerry of her plans to sponsor him in the art world, and eventually arrange for an exhibit of his work. The two also meet up with a few of Milo’s friends, and in the packed nightclub, Jerry bumps into Henri’s fiancée Lise, who is out with a few friends of hers. Jerry is instantly attracted to Lise, and pursues her, ignoring Milo in the process. Lise is
somewhat irritated by his behavior, but Jerry succeeds in finding out her phone number.

On the way home, Milo and Jerry have a heated argument in the limo.

The next day, Jerry tries to call Lise at the perfume shop where she works, and arrange a date with her. Lise is still annoyed by his persistence and tells him to never call her again. Jerry is dejected for a moment, until he runs into Milo again. She goes out of her way to apologize for the argument in the car, and then tells him of her rapid progress in getting his name out to the art world.

Later the same day, Jerry walks down to the perfume shop to try again with Lise. She is at first reluctant, but after he makes her laugh a few times, she agrees to a date. Jerry returns home, elated, and finds Adam at the piano in his apartment, composing. Jerry begins singing and dancing (“Tra-La-La”), unaware that he is annoying Adam.

The next scene shows Lise and Henri having dinner together. After a phone call from Adam, Henri asks Lise if she will be able to make it to his show later that night. She promises to be there, but she is somewhat worried because she had made the date with Jerry.

Later, Jerry and Lise meet for their date, and the two of them walk along the bank of the Seine. Both are somewhat shy with each other, as they are both keeping their other relationships secret. Jerry tells Lise of his growing feelings for her, and expresses them through song and dance (“Love is Here to Stay”). At the end of this number, Lise, rather panicked, asks Jerry, “What time is it?” and then runs off, as she had promised to be at Henri’s show. However, she does agree to see Jerry again the following week.
Henri performs a new song and dance in the style of the Folies Bergere ("I’ll Build a Stairway to Paradise"). Lise arrives at the theater too late; she has missed the entire show. Henri does not seem disappointed, however, as he introduces her to an American concert producer who is helping to further his career. Henri has already made plans for him and Lise to move to America after they are married. Lise is clearly troubled by this news, but Henri does not notice.

The scene now shifts to Jerry and Adam; the two of them talk about Milo, and Adam insinuates that she is interested in more than just his artwork. Jerry denies this, but he seems unsure. Jerry then leaves to meet Milo, and Adam is left alone to daydream in his apartment (Concerto in F, third movement).

Milo surprises Jerry with a brand new – and expensive – art studio, and she tells him that she has arranged an exhibition of his work to take place in just three months. Jerry makes it clear that he is somewhat bothered by the expensive studio, all the other favors that Milo has freely given him, and the upcoming art show, explaining that he would never be ready in time. Milo insists, saying that he has to face the critics sometime. Jerry accepts the deal, on the stipulation that he pays her back for everything. Jerry spends much of his remaining time getting ready for his exhibition by painting many more portraits, including one of Lise holding a red rose.

Back at the Café Huguette, Jerry is expressing his frustrations to Adam in developing his relationship with Lise, while at the same time keeping his obligations with Milo. Henri shows up to share his good news with the two: he is getting married and moving to America to further his stage career. Adam realizes then that Jerry and Henri
are both in love with Lise, and he is sitting between the two, silently panicking and hoping that they don’t discover it themselves. Jerry explains his romantic dilemma to Henri – conveniently leaving out Lise’s name in the process – and asks for his advice. Henri simply advises Jerry to be honest with the girl he loves, and tell her outright that he is in love with her. This advice makes Jerry feel much more at ease. Both men sing about the joys of being in love (“S’Wonderful”). Of course, the irony is that they don’t realize that both of them are in love with the same woman.

Jerry rushes off to meet Lise and confess to her how much he loves her. Lise finally breaks down and confesses her secret: she is going to be married to Henri very soon. She feels a strong obligation to Henri, mostly because of the fact that he took care of her during the war. The two of them realize that they cannot see each other again, and separate, presumably for good. As Jerry leaves, Lise calls after him, “If it means anything to you, I love you.”

In an attempt to suppress his dejection, Jerry goes straight to Milo’s hotel and invites her out to the Beaux Arts Ball, a wild fancy-dress party arranged by Parisian art students. All of the decorations at the ball are in black-and-white, and all the party-goers are wearing outlandish black-and-white costumes. Jerry and Milo encounter Henri and Lise at the ball as well; Henri introduces them to Lise, not knowing that Jerry is already well acquainted with her. Jerry is unable to forget his sorrow, confesses everything to Milo, and leaves her for good.

Jerry steps out on to the balcony and sketches a picture of the Place de la Concorde gates. Lise comes out to the balcony to say a final goodbye to him, and he
tears his drawing in two and lets it fall to the ground. Henri, having stepped out on the balcony for a cigarette, has overheard their conversation, and, feeling miserable, walks out of the party without being seen by Jerry. Jerry watches Lise and Henri leave in their car, feeling emotionally distraught; this distress leads him to fantasize about Paris, his love of art, and his pursuit, and ultimate loss, of Lise (“American in Paris Ballet”). At the end of his fantasy, Jerry turns to leave the balcony and hears a car horn. He looks back, and is surprised to see that Lise and Henri have returned. Henri, it seems, had decided to end their engagement and let Lise stay with Jerry. Lise gives Henri a thankful hug, and as he leaves, she runs to meet Jerry, who runs down a flight of stairs at the same time to meet her. The two lovers embrace, and walk off together into the Parisian sunrise.
WORKS CITED


