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The Gang's All Here: Generic versus Racial Integration in the 1940s Musical

by Sean Griffin

The integrated musical of the late 1940s (led by MGM) often excluded minority performers in an attempt to create a utopian environment. In contrast, Fox's non-integrated musicals of the early 1940s negotiated a space for these performers, which, while problematic, created opportunities for individual agency.

Recent scholarly work on the musical has focused on the genre's ideological constructions of race and ethnicity. However, these analyses focus on one specific subgenre, the integrated musical, and minimize or overlook other subtypes. An examination of loosely structured "vaudeville-influenced" musicals, particularly those made at Twentieth Century-Fox in the 1930s and 1940s, reveals a carnivalesque and potentially more challenging construction of race and ethnicity.

Lena Horne's career at MGM often serves as a primary example of how the musical deals with race. In *That's Entertainment III* (1994), Horne discusses her ambivalent emotions about her days at MGM, recounting that studio executives in the 1940s did not know exactly what to do with a young and pretty black female singer. Consequently, she notes dishearteningly, she was continually given "guest-star" roles, instead of being cast as full-fledged characters. Richard Dyer uses Horne's reflections to comment on the social construction of "whiteness" in the Hollywood musical: "Bursting from the confines of life by singing your heart out and dancing when you feel like it—this is the joy of the musical. Where the musical most disturbingly constructs a vision of race is in the fact that it is whites' privilege to be able to do this."¹

Dyer argues that the structure of racial and ethnic discourse in the musical is intricately tied to the structure of the genre itself. He does not acknowledge, however, that different structures exist *within* the genre. Certainly, many highly regarded musicals include moments when people "burst from the confines of life by singing [their] heart out and dancing when [they] feel like it," but many more films conventionally regarded as musicals do not. If these films construct a different idea of what constitutes "the joy of the musical," then how might that affect the depiction of issues of race and ethnicity?

Roughly simultaneous with MGM placing Lena Horne under contract, two other African American performers, the Nicholas Brothers, were also under contract at Twentieth Century-Fox. Similar to Horne's experience, the dancing team never had narrative roles in the films in which they appeared. Rather, Fayard and

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Harold Nicholas spent their film careers at Fox as a “specialty act.” Yet the structure of Fox’s musicals was very different from the structure of MGM’s, a difference that potentially made audiences regard Horne and the Nicholases differently. Horne was a “guest star,” singing at nightclubs in films in which white characters broke out into song and dance during normal conversation; the Nicholas Brothers performed “specialties” in films in which everyone else, regardless of race or ethnicity, was performing on stage. No one at Fox at this time sang or danced whenever they felt like it. While Horne stood out as “a problem” in MGM musicals, the Nicholas Brothers did what everyone else was doing in the musicals made at Fox.

A number of minority artists appeared in Fox musicals during the 1930s and 1940s. Much of the recent scholarship on musical star personas and racial and ethnic discourse has been devoted to performers who made their most famous films at the studio. Constance Valis Hill has researched the careers of the Nicholas Brothers; Karen Orr Vered has examined Bill Robinson’s work with Shirley Temple; Shari Roberts has analyzed the star persona of Carmen Miranda; and Diane Negra has studied the interplay between ethnicity and “whiteness” in the star persona of Sonja Henie.² Granted, the opportunities for minority performers usually came with a price. To be included on the screen, minority artists often had to conform to stereotypical or Orientalist notions of racial or ethnic identity. Further, as Dyer seems to indicate, using minorities only as guest stars is itself seen as oppressive. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam present an example of the usual critique of these films: “Latin Americans (and Afro-Americans) were almost invariably marginalized by the narrative and cinematic codes, and were usually limited to roles as entertainers within the musical numbers. The musical’s disjunctive structure made possible an ethnic division of labor, counterpointing a relatively ‘realistic’ mode of narrative for the White characters against implausibly ludic musical numbers for the Latinos.”³

Yet, while Fox’s musicals often demeaned minority performers, minority groups were at least acknowledged; MGM’s musicals might seem to be less insulting because minority groups (more often than not) were simply absent from the screen. Also, a critique arguing that minority performers are relegated to the musical portions of the film overlooks the fact that those portions are the *raison d’être* of the genre. A deeper examination reveals that even when bowing to Orientalist demands, minority performers could at times use the structure of the Fox musical to “take over” the film, to momentarily reverse power relations, and place both the white lead characters and white audience members as outsiders.

MGM and Integration. Rick Altman, in *The American Film Musical*, points out how the history of the musical has often hinged on the evolution of what has been termed the “integrated” musical, “producing such debatable claims as Jerome Delamater’s treatment of integration as the genre’s Platonic ideal.”⁴ The term refers to musical numbers that are “integral” to the plot—either by revealing important character traits or by furthering the narrative itself. Thus, in integrated musicals, characters break into song when they should be talking, instead of only when they are “putting on a show” (as in the “backstager” subgenre). Integrated numbers are

markedly different from the songs that dominated in the American musical theater of the early twentieth century. "Book musicals" (as opposed to revues) *did* have characters break into song, but usually under flimsy circumstances, and the songs do not have much direct bearing on the characters. While *Anything Goes* (first produced for the stage in 1934) is a book musical, listening to Cole Porter's score tells a person nothing about the narrative—and any song from the score could just as easily have been placed in another Porter show from the 1930s. In contrast, someone listening to an integrated musical can get a general sense of the narrative from the score, and the songs are so tied to the characters and the storyline that it would be difficult to transplant a song into another property.

The integrated structure lends itself easily to supporting the American musical as art, providing the sense of a unified and cohesive work in which all the pieces are in concert with each other. Dyer's seminal piece on how musicals attempt to present a utopian environment describes integrated musicals as "those which try to dissolve the distinction between narrative and numbers, thus implying that the world of the narrative is also (already) utopian."⁵ Jane Feuer, in *The Hollywood Musical*, points out that when characters use music to express their pent-up emotions, "language is in a sense transfigured, lifted up into a higher, more expressive realm."⁶ Consequently, historians working under an evolutionary model of genre development (such as Delamater) often regard the integrated musical as the *ne plus ultra* of the genre. Even those not writing under such an explicitly teleological framework have tended to focus primarily (if not exclusively) on integrated musicals as the prime examples for analysis.⁷

Under this evolutionary model, the history of the American musical is organized and presented as a history of the precursors and of the development of the integrated structure. Antecedents of the form include both the operetta and the opera bouffé, which had been interweaving narrative and number since the late 1860s.⁸ Formative examples of integrated theatrical productions using the style of American popular music began to appear from the 1920s onward. Songwriter Jerome Kern seemed focused on creating a tighter bond between number and narrative in the series of productions he helped write for the Princess Theater in New York City in the 1920s. Working with lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II, Kern reached his apex with *Show Boat* (first produced for the stage in 1927). Others took up the cause through the next decade, such as George Gershwin in *Porgy and Bess* (first produced for the stage in 1935) and Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, culminating in *Pal Joey* (first produced for the stage in 1940).

Similar experiments in conjoining narrative and number occurred in Hollywood musicals. The early sound musicals starring Jeanette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier blended elements of operetta and the new concept of the integrated American musical. The Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers film cycle in the 1930s at RKO also contained many integrated numbers. Walt Disney's animated fairy tales were possibly among the most integrated musicals being produced on film during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Following in Disney's fantasy footsteps, MGM produced the live-action integrated musical fantasy *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). MGM's growing involvement in integration centered on the film's star, Judy Garland. Garland first

gained critical and popular notice in *The Broadway Melody of 1938* (1937), performing a singing soliloquy called *Dear Mr. Gable*. In the number, she writes a fan letter to Clark Gable—singing the words as she writes them. This format became a signature for Garland in subsequent pictures, closely tying her screen persona to the concepts of integrating number to character and narrative.

Although integrated musicals had been created on stage and screen by the end of the 1930s, factors seemed to work against the integrated structure becoming accepted as the norm. Most of the above examples were considered special, unique, and difficult to imitate. The Princess Theater shows were regarded by the theatergoing public as being for those with “discerning tastes” and not for general audiences (a judgment reinforced by the small seating capacity of the Princess). *Show Boat* was quickly regarded as the “great American musical” in part because of its perceived uniqueness. Critics and audiences in the 1930s could not decide if *Porgy and Bess* was a musical or an opera. *Pal Joey* was thought so different in its initial run that it did only middling box office. Astaire and Rogers were considered a one-of-a-kind pairing that other studios could not hope to match. Disney’s work in animation similarly individuated his musicals, and the reliance on fantasy to allow characters to break into song and dance limited the range of possible uses. It was not until the mid-1940s, and the simultaneous success of Rodgers and Hammerstein on Broadway and of MGM producer Arthur Freed in Hollywood, that integration started becoming the standard for the genre.

On Broadway, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II (R&H) began their partnership with the integrated musical *Oklahoma!* in 1943. It is hard to overstate the importance critics and historians have given *Oklahoma!*’s debut. For example, Geoffrey Holden Block in his review of American musical theater, *Enchanted Evenings*, breaks the history into “Before *Oklahoma!*” and “After *Oklahoma!*”⁹ Beyond the play’s enormous success, most regard R&H’s first collaboration as the point when integration overtook the looser book musical as the dominant structure for the genre. The characters in *Oklahoma!* do not sing songs as part of a stage performance or in other situations where people would be expected to sing and dance. Instead, the numbers are part of the characters’ general conversation. For example, the singing of *The Surrey with the Fringe on Top* encompasses an entire scene in which Curly tries to entice Laurie into coming to the box social with him. Further, the lyrics are written in the vernacular of the characters, tying them even more strongly to their personas. While Cole Porter’s songs could be (and often were) used in several properties, it would be virtually impossible to transplant *The Surrey with the Fringe on Top* to some other R&H musical (imagine, for example, putting it into *Flower Drum Song!*).

The stunning success of *Oklahoma!* was followed by a string of similarly integrated pieces from R&H, including *Carousel* (first produced for the stage in 1945), *South Pacific* (first produced for the stage in 1949), and *The King and I* (first produced for the stage in 1950). The duo’s ascendancy to the throne of the Broadway musical via integration pressured other songwriters (both established and up and coming) to adapt. Irving Berlin capitulated by writing *Annie Get Your Gun* (first produced for the stage in 1946), which R&H produced. Cole Porter turned

out *Kiss Me Kate* (first produced for the stage in 1948). By the 1950s, the integrated musical had become the norm on the American stage.

A year after *Oklahoma!*'s debut, MGM released *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944). The links between the two musicals are strong. They shared Lemuel Ayers as scenic designer, and the film was originally supposed to include a song from *Oklahoma!* that had been cut during tryouts for the play. Also, the film and play integrated numbers and narrative. For example, early on in the film, teenage Esther Smith (Judy Garland) gazes longingly out her living-room window at young John Pruitt, who has just moved in next door. Leaning against the window frame, Esther indicates her feelings to the audience by breaking into a sung monologue, *The Boy Next Door* (another of Garland's singing soliloquies). Later, as the family spends what may be their last Christmas in St. Louis before moving to New York, Esther tries to cheer up her little sister, Tootie (Margaret O'Brien), in the number *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. Perfectly encapsulating how the integrated number can express narrative and character complexity, the song obliquely points out Esther's own melancholy even while she tries to paint an optimistic picture.

Meet Me in St. Louis became one of the biggest box-office hits in MGM's history, precipitating a long string of similarly integrated musicals from the studio.¹⁰ Arthur Freed produced many of these films, such as *The Harvey Girls* (1946), *Easter Parade* (1948), *On the Town* (1949), *An American in Paris* (1951), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *The Band Wagon* (1953), and *Gigi* (1958). The Freed Unit musicals enjoyed such critical and box-office success—winning two Best Picture Oscars—that MGM and the integrated structure came to dominate the Hollywood musical much as R&H had come to rule Broadway. MGM would continue its reign throughout the 1950s, until it ended because of internal restructuring at MGM and other studios (as a result of the Supreme Court's mandate for studios to divest their theater holdings) and the rise of big-budget adaptations of hit integrated musicals from Broadway.

There are many possible explanations for why the integrated musical caught public and critical attention when it did. On the one hand, a genre evolution may have made the ascension of integration inevitable. On the other hand, a more historically grounded analysis might note that *Oklahoma!* and *Meet Me in St. Louis* both use the integrated structure to consciously present romantic visions of the heritage of the nation.¹¹ *Oklahoma!* depicts the settling of the American West by invoking folk culture: community box socials and honeymoon "shivarees." *Meet Me in St. Louis* nostalgically recreates small-town life at the turn of the century, with families celebrating holidays and making catsup in the kitchen. Stephen Harvey, in *Directed by Vincente Minnelli*, describes *Meet Me in St. Louis* as "an intimate, period chronicle of a 'typical' American family in musical terms."¹² Such representations of America as a utopia that would spur its citizens to break into spontaneous song and dance would understandably be popular to a citizenry defending their country during World War II.

Yet, in placing the word "typical" in quotes, Harvey underlines an important point: *Meet Me in St. Louis* carefully manages its presentation of American identity.



Figure 1. Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, and Tom Drake in a publicity photo for *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944). The film's appeal to American nostalgia is linked to a celebration of "whiteness," which is emphasized by the costume design for the finale. Courtesy Remember When Memorabilia, Dallas.

In both the film and *Oklahoma!*, the America presented is totally white. The five categories that Dyer lists as contributing to the sense of utopia in the musical genre are made possible in these texts only by erasing racial difference. If African Americans appeared in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, or if Native Americans had been included in *Oklahoma!*, the feelings of abundance ("elimination of poverty for self and others; equal distribution of wealth"), energy ("work and play synonymous"), transparency ("open, . . . honest communication and relationships"), and community ("all together in one place, communal interests, collective activity") would have been severely compromised. The fifth category, intensity, might have remained, but the "drama, affectivity of living," would have had a vastly different meaning than Dyer intended in regard to racial minority groups.¹³ Without the sense of unity and communal cohesion created by the elision of racial difference, audiences might not have accepted the integrated blend of number and narrative so wholeheartedly.

While it is doubtful that either R&H or the MGM Freed Unit purposefully conspired to exclude nonwhites, the effort to present a happy world *without discord*

(to use musical terminology) meant constructing a nostalgic environment that avoided any of the complex issues confronting American society. Imagine an African American couple trying to get on the trolley to the fairgrounds in *St. Louis*. In all likelihood, the joyous energy of *The Trolley Song* would have been quelled as Garland's Esther Smith had to acknowledge and step over the minority riders forced to sit in the back (if they had been allowed on at all). Similarly, Act II of *Oklahoma!* opens with the hope that *The Farmer and the Cowman* should be friends—with no mention of “the Red Man” in this détente. At one point *St. Louis* vaguely indicates the existence of nonwhite cultures, when Esther and Tootie perform the cakewalk to *Under the Bamboo Tree*. Yet most audiences in 1944 (not to mention today) would not recognize how these white middle-class sisters were appropriating African American musical heritage.¹⁴ Consequently, the ascension of the integrated musical can be seen not as an inevitable progression but as one fraught with ideological implications.

Somewhat ironically, the focus of the American musical shifted to issues of integration at the same time that civil rights groups began focusing on racial and ethnic integration. Growing awareness of the Holocaust in Nazi-dominated Europe began to force the United States to come to grips with its own racial and ethnic prejudices. Practical matters of the war also encouraged social and professional interaction among racial and ethnic groups. The Good Neighbor Policy (promoted by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs [CIAA]) worked to establish stronger ties with Latin American countries to keep them from siding with the Axis powers. One of the main strategies of this policy was the promotion of Latin American culture (fashion, music) in the U.S. throughout the war. World War II also demanded increased productivity in both the armed forces and the domestic sphere, giving racial and ethnic minority groups access to jobs previously denied them (similar to the greater opportunities afforded women in the workplace during the war). Industries began to racially integrate their workforces. After the war, President Truman integrated the armed forces, and Jackie Robinson broke through the “color line” of professional baseball. Integration became the clarion call of the postwar civil rights movement—in housing, education, as well as public transportation and restrooms.

These moves toward racial integration were not always smooth or uniform, and white communities often resisted, sometimes with violence. While reaching out to several nonwhite communities, the federal government was simultaneously interning thousands of Japanese Americans for the duration of the war. In June 1943, at the height of the Good Neighbor Policy, riots erupted in Los Angeles between white servicemen and young Latinos. Two weeks after these “zoot suit” riots, violence between blacks and whites left thirty-four dead and about seven hundred injured in Detroit. Similar outbreaks of racial violence occurred in forty-seven other cities before the end of the war, including a not-so-nostalgic St. Louis.¹⁵ With this in mind, it is perhaps not so ironic that *Oklahoma!* and *Meet Me in St. Louis* became popular by presenting reassuring pictures of an America devoid of racial difference.

This is not to say that the American integrated musical *by its nature* could not deal with issues of race and ethnicity. *Show Boat*, the forerunner of the form,

fundamentally revolves around issues of race. Musicals such as *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and R&H's own *South Pacific* and *The King and I* deal with race and ethnicity. Yet, as integration was becoming accepted and standardized in the musical, the studios shunned any move toward racial and ethnic integration. Following in the wake of *Oklahoma!* and *St. Louis*, a literally whitewashed Americana was celebrated in integrated musicals on both stage and screen. On Broadway, *Oklahoma!* was quickly followed by *Bloomer Girl* (first produced for the stage in 1944), *Up in Central Park* (first produced for the stage in 1945), and R&H's own *Carousel* and *Allegro* (first produced for the stage in 1947). Similar integrated Americana could be found on screen in *Can't Help Singing* (1944, Universal), *State Fair* (1945, Fox), *The Harvey Girls* (1946, MGM), *Centennial Summer* (1946, Fox), and *Summer Holiday* (1948, MGM).

The film produced by Arthur Freed just before *St. Louis* seems to emphasize the link between "whiteness" and the sudden ascension of the integrated musical. *Cabin in the Sky* (1943) showed black artists (including Lena Horne in the one MGM film in which she had a character part) performing musically integrated numbers. Yet the film is segregated racially—no white characters appear in this all-black fantasy. Critics were impressed and the film made back its money, but Freed scored a much larger box-office hit that year with *DuBarry Was a Lady*—a splashy, old-fashioned book musical loaded with numbers that had little to do with the plot.¹⁶ It would take the white Americana of *Meet Me in St. Louis* for Freed to make *musical* integration popular. For the rest of the 1940s, as Dyer correctly points out, white characters having "a rapturous relationship with their environment" were shown "consummately [in] the MGM-style musical."¹⁷

Fox and the Vaudeville Tradition. While discussions of MGM musicals have for the most part dominated musical genre criticism, the musical output from Twentieth Century-Fox has been largely ignored. Altman, for example, mentions only two Fox artists in *The American Film Musical*; Carmen Miranda is mentioned in passing, and Shirley Temple's films are discussed briefly as a potential problem in his argument about the genre's dual-focus narrative. Yet Fox's musicals were just as popular with general audiences as MGM's during the classical Hollywood era (roughly the 1930s to the 1950s). As Fox's leading musical star in the 1930s, Temple dominated at the box office throughout the Depression, easily besting MGM's Eleanor Powell and the operatic duo of Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. Fox's musicals remained popular during World War II, led by Betty Grable, the top female box-office star during the period. Fox also inaugurated a successful string of "south-of-the-border" pictures during the war years, a concept copied at all the other studios, including MGM.

Why has there been such critical avoidance of the entire musical output of the studio? First, Fox has in no way matched MGM in its efforts to promote the studio's musical heritage; Fox has no *That's Entertainment* retrospectives, for example. Until recently, many of the Fox musicals from the 1930s and 1940s were hard to find (in repertory houses, on video, or on cable), unlike the Freed Unit musicals for MGM. Another reason Fox musicals are overlooked is that there is a general

assumption that integration is the summit of the genre. Since the typical Fox musical in the prime of its popularity (roughly 1935–1944) did *not* integrate numbers and narrative, the films may seem outmoded, unsophisticated, or backward.

In fact, during the early 1940s, Fox seems to have actively resisted integrating musical numbers into narrative, even when it would have been easy to do so. A perfect example appears in *The Gang's All Here* (1943), the one film that seems to have been singled out for study from the Fox musical canon (mainly, it seems, because Busby Berkeley acted as director for his only Fox film). Yearning for her boyfriend away at war, Edie Allen (Alice Faye) stands by a window and sings *No Love, No Nothing*, a set-up similar to that used in *Meet Me in St. Louis* for *The Boy Next Door*. Yet, while *The Boy Next Door* is completely integrated into the plot, *No Love, No Nothing* is sung as a nightclub number in rehearsal, and the window is a stage flat.

A moment such as this suggests that those involved in musical production at Fox were not interested in producing integrated musicals and were after a different effect entirely. As Berkeley scholar Martin Rubin notes, “The format of the Fox musical was highly receptive to the incursion of Berkeleyesque spectacle—in contrast to the format of the MGM musical, which actively constrained it.”¹⁸ Reviewers at the time *The Gang's All Here* was released recognized the emphasis was on the elaborate artifice. Wanda Hale of the *New York Daily News* wrote: “It’s colossal, it’s stupendous, and one of the artiest productions ever made. . . . It is a Technicolor dream that takes on nightmarish proportions or the aspects of a Dali drawing in motion.”¹⁹ The review in the *New York Times* similarly points out that “if the faces [of the stars] are familiar, so are the clichés. . . . In fact, the most imaginative things in the show are the sets and costumes.”²⁰ These reviews emphasize that the achievement of *The Gang's All Here* had nothing to do with the storyline and everything to do with the numbers—seeing them as easily separable items.

If integration was clearly not a top priority, then on what structural concept was the Fox musical based? A review of the 1944 Fox musical *Greenwich Village* perhaps describes the concept best: “a hodgepodge of specialty numbers decked out in garish color photography. Twentieth Century-Fox has a formula for this sort of show.”²¹ The Fox formula referred to in the review involves a standardized plot, broken up by various performers (who often play little or no part in the narrative) coming out and doing numbers. The term “specialty” emphasized a view of these artists as having a specific talent or act that could be inserted into a film without being directly tied to the storyline. As Gerald Mast succinctly concludes, “While MGM musicals descend from the book tradition of weaving song and story, Fox musicals descend from vaudeville.”²²

Unlike the integrated structure that became the norm by the end of the 1940s, the theatrical structure of vaudeville (codified roughly at the turn of the century) did not maintain a coherent, unified vision. Henry Jenkins points out how the “vaudeville aesthetic” focused strongly on *variety*, a term often used in place of “vaudeville” at the time.²³ Theater managers formulated a structure that emphasized the radical differences among acts: a comic was followed by an opera singer, who was followed by a dog act, which was followed by a tap dancer, who was followed by a magic act, and so on. One did not place two comics next to each other

on the bill or, more important in relation to the Fox musical, two acts that were similar in mood. The emphasis was on the cornucopia of entertainment—ticket buyers would feel they had seen *everything*. Although theatrical vaudeville was practically dead by the end of the 1930s, a version of the form remained on radio, where vaudeville-trained entertainers, such as Bob Hope and Edgar Bergen, hosted variety programs.

The vaudeville aesthetic also lived on in many film musicals put out by a number of studios in the 1930s. While ostensibly book musicals, these films were often situated in environments—nightclubs, theaters, and so on—that enabled various artists to perform their acts. Even MGM's *Broadway Melody* series (not the first entry in 1928, but the entries in 1935, 1937, and 1940) alternated plot with extraneous specialty spots. Several of these vaudeville-influenced musicals overtly pointed out how radio was keeping the tradition alive. Paramount's series of *Big Broadcast* musicals (1932, 1935, 1936, 1938) all showcased vaudeville and nightclub entertainers putting on a fictional radio broadcast. Fox's *The Great American Broadcast* (1941) fictionally retold the history of radio as a pretext for presenting various specialties. The films listed above all fit into the definition of the backstage subgenre—musicals focused specifically on efforts to “put on a show.” Many other vaudeville-influenced musicals are not concerned with show-business people. The characters “just happen” to go to a lot of nightclubs and lavish parties, thus enabling them to be entertained by various “guest performers.”²⁴

Led by Darryl F. Zanuck, Fox's use of the vaudeville structure in its musicals resulted in enormous box-office success. The first Fox film featuring Norwegian ice skater Sonja Henie, *One in a Million* (1936), provides a good example. A romantic scene between Henie and Don Ameche is followed by her in an ice-skating number, then a comic moment by the Ritz Brothers about nothing in particular. Next, the film shifts to dinner at a local inn with all the principals. This scene allows for another small plot development but also provides an opportunity for Dixie Dunbar to sing a ballad. This is followed by the sudden appearance of and a performance by Borrah Minnevitich and His Harmonica Rascals, ending with Borrah handing a rose to Henie, to bring the viewer back to the star. This formula structured all the musicals Fox made until the end of the war.

Tom Gunning theorizes that early cinema as a whole tended to follow this vaudeville aesthetic, particularly in its foregrounding of spectacle. While American cinema eventually focused on suturing the viewer into the diegetic world of the narrative, the “cinema of attractions” mode held on “as a component of narrative films, more evident in some genres (e.g., the musical) than in others.”²⁵ Both integrated and nonintegrated musicals are implicated in this quote, in that any switch from talking to singing, from walking to dancing, will (to a certain extent) create spectacle, which is fundamental to the “cinema of attractions” mode. In the integrated musical, though, the spectacular nature of the numbers is diminished by enfolding them into the diegesis. Conversely, those musicals that specifically draw from vaudeville, literally interrupting the narrative to showcase some frivolity (usually performed directly to the camera/viewer), seem to manifest the “cinema of attractions” style more overtly. Further, Gunning conceptualizes that this

mode of early cinema “goes underground . . . into certain avant-garde practices.”²⁶ Consequently, in retaining the “cinema of attractions” mode, the musical potentially ties the genre to the avant-garde as well. Jenkins points out that futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein were both intrigued with the possibility that the cacophony of voices and the rapid disjunctions of the vaudeville aesthetic could be used to create Brechtian distancing and dialectical synthesis.²⁷

Altman, Feuer, and Dyer have all noted that, as a result of the alternative space created by the numbers, musicals have the potential to resist the ideological imperatives of traditional Hollywood narrative.²⁸ Feuer has specifically examined how the technique of self-reflexivity, often employed by the avant-garde, is common in the musical genre.²⁹ Yet all three scholars emphasize that the Hollywood musical inevitably attempts to reinscribe the subject into the dominant ideology, often through the musical numbers themselves. Feuer describes how self-reflexivity in musicals often strengthens the sense of utopia when it is *not* employed. Dyer points out that the narrative/number dichotomy is often resolved by having the numbers promote the same hegemonic standards as the narrative.

While *integrated* numbers ideally work in just this fashion (the utopia of the numbers is directly structured into the narrative), *nonintegrated* numbers have the potential to create more problems. Such problems are usually minimized in “putting-on-the-show” narratives, since the hegemonic resolution of the plot depends on the performance of the numbers, even if the songs themselves do not directly comment on the story or the characters. Often, though, specialties do not have even this tangential relationship to the narrative and simply appear out of nowhere (as if the producers realized that too much time had gone by without a musical number and tossed one in haphazardly). The films Jenkins describes in *What Made Pistachio Nuts?*, his discussion of the vaudeville aesthetic, are “marked by a general questioning of social norms, . . . [with a tendency] toward heterogeneity, even at the risk of disunity and incoherence.”³⁰ Although Jenkins ostensibly studies comedies, many of the films he examines are musicals. (In fact, the film Jenkins describes in the introduction, a sequence from which the book gets its title, is a 1934 Fox musical called *Stand Up and Cheer*.)

Use of the vaudeville aesthetic creates a concerted lack of unity and cohesion in the Fox musical, marking it as conspicuously different from the integrated musical made at MGM—and allowing for a potential questioning of social norms. Rubin’s description of *The Gang’s All Here* indicates the distancing the use of the vaudeville aesthetic created: “The narrative passages are greatly denaturalized (to a certain extent, they are denarrativized), while the musical numbers maintain their excessiveness, so that narrative and numbers alike exist on a precipitous level of garish delirium.”³¹

The carnivalesque nature of Fox musicals during this period opens gaps in the narrative construction of these films through which various hegemonic norms can momentarily be critiqued and up-ended. Jenkins, for example, examines the star persona of Charlotte Greenwood to discuss how the vaudeville aesthetic potentially problematizes gender norms. Greenwood would become a fixture in Fox

musicals during the 1940s.³² The reliance on female stars (Temple, Grable, Faye, and Henie) makes the Fox musical ripe for an exploration of how the vaudeville aesthetic may complicate gender discourse.³³ How the vaudeville aesthetic affects issues of sexuality and of class structure in the Fox musical seems ripe for further study as well.

The final section of this article provides one example of the hegemonic enervations the vaudeville aesthetic caused: the discourse of race and ethnicity in the Fox musical. Jenkins also explores how the “anarchism” of “vaudeville-influenced” films affects issues of race and ethnicity in his analysis of the Eddie Cantor musical *Whoopee!* (1930). He points out that Cantor’s free-wheeling adoption of Jewish, Native American, and African American personas seems to satirize essentialist conceptions of race and ethnicity, conceptions that are central to the miscegenation plot that is unfolding between the two “straight” leads. In concordance with Jenkins’s analysis, nonintegrated numbers in Fox musicals at times create a sense of incoherence that minority artists could use to critique ideological constructions of race and ethnicity and thereby overturn a sense of white preeminence.

Fox, the Vaudeville Tradition, and the Minority Performer. Lena Horne’s cinematic career may have been predominantly at MGM, but probably her most iconic moment on film happens as she sings the title song in Fox’s *Stormy Weather* (1943). Leaning disconsolately by a window, she sings about not having her man—just like Garland in *St. Louis* and Faye in *The Gang’s All Here*. But, being a Fox musical, Horne’s number is a nightclub routine and not integrated into the narrative. Fox’s emphasis on specialties created a rare opportunity in classical Hollywood cinema for non-Caucasians, as the studio hired numerous minority performers to appear in its musicals. The Nicholas Brothers worked consistently at Fox in the early 1940s doing specialty numbers. For *Song of the Islands* (1942), Hawaiian “Hilo Hattie” performed one of her routines. For *Down Argentine Way* (1940), Fox hired the “Brazilian Bombshell,” Carmen Miranda, fresh from her immensely popular nightclub and stage appearances in New York. Miranda’s immediate popularity with audiences led to a long-term contract at Fox, moving her beyond specialty numbers and into scripts as a character.

Fox quite consciously increased its use of minority specialties in the face of World War II. Zanuck, having ties with the CIAA, specifically produced musicals like *Down Argentine Way*, *That Night in Rio* (1941), and *Weekend in Havana* (1941) to further the Good Neighbor Policy. Critics, and probably other viewers, made the connection even at the time. For example, the *New York Post* enthused that Carmen Miranda, “as an advertisement for Roosevelt’s good-neighbor policy, . . . [was] worth half a hundred diplomatic negotiations.”³⁴ Granted, Zanuck and Fox also made these Good Neighbor musicals in an attempt to gain greater revenues from South America, since the European market was closed because of the war.³⁵ Zanuck had always been interested in pursuing social causes. His tenure at Warner Bros. during the Depression resulted in movies dealing with social injustice and poverty that were relatively tough and incisive for a Hollywood studio; and at Fox, Zanuck produced films like *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *Gentleman’s*



Figure 2. A poster advertising *Down Argentine Way* (Irving Cummings, 1940). Don Ameche's gaze leads the viewer to focus on Carmen Miranda, whose image is positioned higher and slightly in front of that of Betty Grable, the ostensible female lead. Courtesy Herschenson-Allen Archives.

Agreement (1947), and *Pinky* (1949), all focused on race and class issues most studios thought untouchable.³⁶

Latin American cooperation during World War II was not the only racial or ethnic issue addressed in Fox musicals. They also helped the government by whipping up African American support for the war. Faced with Jim Crow laws still on the books in many states and with racial segregation, Walter White, head of the NAACP, met with and lobbied studio executives to improve depictions of African Americans in the media. (Freed's production of *Cabin in the Sky* coincided with White's lobbying.³⁷) Soon, White was joined in coordinating the campaign by Wendell Wilkie, the former Republican candidate for president and, importantly, one of the chairmen of the board at Twentieth Century-Fox.³⁸ In addition to using the Nicholas Brothers throughout this period, the studio produced the all-black cast film *Stormy Weather*. The film opens with Bill Robinson returning from fighting in World War I and closes as a new generation of African American men readies to fight in World War II.

Bill Robinson had a long history at the studio, appearing with (and teaching) Shirley Temple in several box-office bonanzas during the 1930s. Fox also had arguably Hollywood's biggest African American star under contract in the 1930s: Stepin Fetchit. Yet the infamous image of Stepin Fetchit in the annals of Hollywood race relations underlines the harrowing downside to Fox's use of minority performers. To find work, individuals often played roles that supported simplistic, degrading stereotypes. This did not necessarily change with the start of the war. While the African American community is valued in *Stormy Weather*, according to historian Donald Bogle, Lena Horne is "so tightly controlled in her acting that she appeared to be the biggest black bourgeois phony the movies had ever seen."³⁹

Similarly, Shari Roberts points out that "by trading negative 'lazy greaseball' stereotypes for positive 'happy children' stereotypes, the Fox Latin American musicals clearly did not come close to escaping racist representation."⁴⁰ Although the studio often trumpeted how it worked tirelessly with ambassadors or envoys from different countries in the making of these films, there is plenty to prove that Fox lacked concern with individuating Latin American cultures. Placing Brazilian Carmen Miranda (singing in Portuguese) in both *Down Argentine Way* and *Weekend in Havana* showcases a version of what theorist Edward Said has termed "Orientalism," as Fox presented an all-purpose generic Latin America, much to the consternation of filmgoers in Cuba and Argentina. One press release for *That Night in Rio* stated that "because South of the Border is simply South of the Border so far as lyricist Mack Gordon is concerned, . . . among the songs presented for approval to Brazilian authorities as part of the film was one called *Buenas Noches*. 'But that's Spanish,' was the complaint, 'and in Brazil we speak Portuguese.'"⁴¹

While MGM's structurally integrated musicals dealt with the racial tensions of the 1940s by erasing the existence of racial minorities, Fox's vaudeville-influenced musicals used a different hegemonic strategy: minority performers gained a space, but often at the price of upholding traditional stereotypes. Donald Bogle and Thomas Cripps both argue that African American actors consistently have had to play stereotypical roles but go on to emphasize what numerous performers did within

the stereotypes. Hill takes from this, in her analysis of the Nicholas Brothers: "It is not *that* the Nicholas Brothers don the minstrel mask but *how* they *play through it* that becomes a fascinating example of the way these performers manipulated the seemingly intractable rules governing black performance."⁴² Simply dismissing minority specialty acts as merely reinforcing dominant white conceptions of race and ethnicity ignores the complex negotiations going on between the performers and the white hegemony.

Although overseen by white superiors (directors, producers, and studio executives), many of these minority specialty acts had a stronger degree of control than minority dramatic actors and actresses at the time. Certainly, Miranda wielded a lot of control over her films. Press releases from the studio indicate that Miranda's intervention helped give starlet Maria Montez a featured dance number in *That Night in Rio*, a spot that would catch the eye of Universal talent scouts who would quickly put her under contract.⁴³ Similarly, Miranda convinced her producers to write in a part for Mexican American actor Chris-Pin Martin in *Weekend in Havana*.⁴⁴ Miranda was also able to get the studio to sign a contract with her own Brazilian orchestra, which often appeared with her in her films.⁴⁵

Miranda gained much of this power before her first film had even been completed. She had already made a spectacular splash in New York City nightclubs, and Fox was more than eager to give her a contract. The studio thus agreed to film the numbers for *Down Argentine Way* in New York, since Miranda still had obligations to fill in her nightclub contract. Miranda's involvement in the film was considered so crucial that when Alice Faye, the ostensible star, came down with appendicitis, Fox put newcomer Betty Grable in the role rather than imperil their shooting schedule with Miranda.⁴⁶

While Roberts's work on Miranda presents her as a special case, most of the specialty acts maintained at least some creative control over their numbers. Hilo Hattie successfully refused attempts by the makeup department for *Song of the Islands* to transform her into their idea of what a Hawaiian should look like.⁴⁷ Bill Robinson maintained some control behind the camera, based on a contract requiring that he get screen credit for staging numbers even when he did not appear on screen.⁴⁸ Fox's high regard for Robinson is reflected in *Stormy Weather*, which from its inception was planned as a tribute to him. Like Robinson, the Nicholas Brothers did their own choreography and were able to persuade Fox to hire Harold's wife, a young Dorothy Dandridge, to join them in their *Chattanooga Choo Choo* number in *Sun Valley Serenade* (1941).⁴⁹ Because these artists were considered specialties, Fox (and other studios when specialty acts were employed) gave minority performers a greater-than-usual degree of artistic freedom—the performers knew what they could do better than a studio-assigned choreographer or director.

The studios may have also granted minority performers greater control over their numbers because, as specialty acts, they were segregated cinematically from the white characters. The vaudeville aesthetic was well suited for maintaining a "color line."⁵⁰ Bogle points out the pragmatic need for this structure: "Because musical numbers were not integrated into the script, the scenes featuring the blacks could be cut from the films without spoiling them should local . . . theater owners feel



Figure 3. The Nicholas Brothers dancing to *Chattanooga Choo Choo* in *Sun Valley Serenade* (H. Bruce Humberstone, 1941), a specialty routine typical of Fox musicals of the period. Courtesy The Everett Collection.

their audiences would object to seeing a Negro.”⁵¹ Worries by the Production Code Administration (PCA) about images that could suggest miscegenation also restricted interracial mixing. While a few performers, such as Bill Robinson with Shirley Temple, *did* cross the boundary lines, minority artists for the most part came on, did their bit, and then departed. Consequently, Fox’s early 1940s musicals are in actuality no more integrated racially than musically.

Many have rightly decried the studios’ racist production practices. However, regarding musical numbers as a “ghetto” vastly oversimplifies the situation. Critics acknowledged the flimsy narratives in Fox musicals at the time of their release. In all likelihood, then, audiences flocked to these films more for the musical numbers than for the plot lines, and evidence indicates that the virtuoso talent of minority specialties often worked effectively to interrupt and supercede the white stars and the narrative trajectory.

The Nicholas Brothers’ appearance in *Down Argentine Way*, their first film at Fox and the first of the Good Neighbor cycle, provides an excellent example. Both the *Motion Picture Herald* and *Motion Picture Daily* reported that one preview audience found their dance routine so awe-inspiring that the projectionist was literally forced to “stop the show” until the cheers subsided.⁵² Hill’s research on the Nicholases shows that this reaction was not an isolated phenomenon:

In a small town in Texas, the local newspaper informed its readers of how many minutes into the film the Nicholas Brothers appeared; townsfolk arrived at the theater minutes before the scene, stood and cheered while watching it, and left soon after it was over. In Brooklyn, the marquee of a movie theater announced, "Nicholas Brothers in *Down Argentine Way*." . . . Even on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles, the starring names of Betty Grable and Don Ameche were dropped from the marquee of the Hollywood Theater, which announced, "Nicholas Brothers in *Down Argentine Way*."⁵³

Further emphasizing that the numbers, rather than the narrative, were often the attraction in Fox musicals, the Nicholas Brothers' specialty appearances (at least at times) were not cut from prints exhibited in supposedly racist movie houses.⁵⁴

The Nicholas Brothers were not the only minority performers to gain such attention. *Variety's* review of *That Night in Rio* pointed out how Miranda's ostensibly supporting character upstaged the supposed white leads: "Ameche is very capable in a dual role, and Miss Faye is eye-appealing but it's the tempestuous Miranda who really gets away to a flying start from the first sequence."⁵⁵ Publicity for the films in which Miranda appeared often sent mixed signals as to who was the leading female star. A full-page ad in *Movie Mirror* for *Down Argentine Way*, Miranda's first U.S. film, has an image of her front and center. Her image is also much larger than anyone else's, including the official stars, Grable and Ameche, cheek to cheek and off to the right.⁵⁶ Other one-sheet posters for the film show Ameche in the center looking to the left at Miranda and ignoring Grable to the right.⁵⁷

Importantly, almost all the white male leads in Fox's musicals from the 1940s (John Payne, Victor Mature, George Montgomery) had no musical ability. Thus, racial minorities (and Anglo women) tended to dominate the privileged space of the musical numbers, successfully making the white patriarch the outsider.⁵⁸ Often this power shift is recouped by putting these performers under the kindly paternal gaze of the white male lead. Yet the intended effect may not have always been achieved. Certainly audiences that showed up only to see the three minutes when the Nicholases were on screen in *Down Argentine Way* (and then left) would have had a hard time noting the white audience that was watching the performers. Further, Miranda's contract with Fox included a provision that *forbade* editors to cut away from her while she was singing—effectively blocking shots of a controlling gaze by the white leads and creating a segregation on *Miranda's* terms.⁵⁹

Roberts argues that the Good Neighbor musicals ostensibly promoted racial harmony "through the 'universal' language of music."⁶⁰ While it is quite probable that this was the studio's overt intention, it is just as possible to read a much different theme in these films: the shared recognition of a mutual struggle against domination. Hemispheric musical diplomacy was inevitably expressed between Carmen Miranda and the white *female* leads. While Alice Faye and Betty Grable presented a "peaches-and-cream" alternative to Miranda's "exotic" Latin image, their camaraderie is often based on a shared gender struggle against the double-crosses and manipulations of the male characters. The "universal language of music" consequently remains the province of the conventionally disempowered.

Minority performers at times used the disjunctive space of a number to make not only the white male lead but the white *viewer* the outsider. Hill describes

many of the Nicholas Brothers' routines as a variation of a "challenge" dance (a tradition influenced by the African musical idiom of call and response). Rather than a battle over who was the better dancer, interviews with Fayard Nicholas describe their routines as a type of private conversation: "[Harold] would do . . . [a solo turn] and look pretty, and I'd admire him doing it. Then I'd do my step, and he'd look at me and admire me."⁶¹

Roberts describes Miranda's first appearance in *Down Argentine Way* in similar terms. After the opening credits, the screen reveals Miranda in an unidentified space singing *South American Way* directly toward the camera. Except for the title phrase, she sings solely in Portuguese and "has no dialogue with the other film characters. . . . The knowingness she expresses in this clip indicates her own subjectivity, insinuating that she knows a secret to which the viewer will never have access."⁶²

Stormy Weather provides another clear example of a black artist slipping things past unknowing whites. As another all-black musical from 1943, the film merits comparison to MGM's *Cabin in the Sky*. While the MGM film is an integrated fantasy, the Fox film follows the vaudeville aesthetic—an overt "picture-album" of almost thirty years of black entertainment. The integrated structure of *Cabin in the Sky* leaves little room for the minority performer to disrupt the unified concepts of the (white) screenwriters, songwriters, director, and producer; the looser vaudeville structure of *Stormy Weather* creates more leeway for individual creativity. Fats Waller's rendition of his song *That Ain't Right* with Ada Brown includes the risqué lyric "Sister, I was born ballin'—and I'm gonna keep ballin' all my life." The sexual frankness of the line directly violates the dictates of the Production Code. Yet the multiple possible meanings of "ballin'" apparently helped sneak the lyric by the censors. Letters to and from the PCA express no problem with the lyrics. White employees at Fox, though, seemed as in the dark as the PCA about the connotations of "ballin'," as evident from the continuity script of the completed film, which was done by someone sitting in a screening room and taking down the dialogue: the transcriber spells the word "bawlin'."⁶³ To the transcriber, the slang spoken by the cast seems as foreign a tongue as Miranda's Portuguese. Often dialogue is noted down as simply "gibberish." The original script even had the word "jive" spelled with a "g" before being erased and corrected.⁶⁴

Moments like these suggest that minority audiences might have "got" things that white audiences did not. Roberts's analysis of Miranda argues that "while Carmen Miranda's parodic star text offers various negative images of Latin Americans and of women, her persona also reveals these images as stereotypes, allowing for negotiated reading by fans."⁶⁵ This "negotiated reading" seems to have occurred with other minority performers working at Fox as well. Hilo Hattie was beloved by her Hawaiian community, who knew her also as Clara Inter. Inter had been a well-respected schoolteacher for years before becoming a performer, and she spoke fine English. Her biographer states that, as Hattie, Inter's shift into pidgin English was enjoyed by Hawaiians as a gentle parody of how non-Pacific Islanders conceived of them.⁶⁶

"Stopping the show" and other methods of taking the film away from the white protagonists (and perhaps from white viewers) created possibilities for radicalism

within the Fox musical. These potentialities are small—what Michel de Certeau refers to as guerilla tactics against a larger hegemonic strategy.⁶⁷ But these tactics are there in the midst of what others have analyzed as simply racist stereotypes. And at least one irritated white audience member in 1944 commented on the use of this strategy. Zella Richardson, a member of Atlanta's film censorship board, wrote to complain about a low-budget musical called *Pistol Packin' Mama* (1943): "I was really quite surprised at the way this 'quicke' was coming along, until out came the negro trio. No sense no real reason whatever for it—not even in keeping with the time (supposed) of the picture—just injected like throwing a rock into a clear pond and muddying it up." Hoping that the studios would realize that "white people CAN be entertaining without having to inject Negroes," Ms. Richardson obviously recognized how the vaudeville structure was allowing a powerful space for minorities . . . and did not like it.⁶⁸

Conclusion: Whose State Fair? By the end of the 1940s, the Nicholas Brothers and even Carmen Miranda had made films at MGM. Yet when MGM used them, its commitment to musical integration evaporated. Like Lena Horne, Miranda was featured as a "guest star" in her two films at MGM, *A Date with Judy* (1948) and *Nancy Goes to Rio* (1950). But, unlike Horne, Miranda was allowed to have one or two small scenes with the films' white star, Jane Powell. Still, Miranda's roles were a lot smaller than the parts she had at Fox. Both films were also produced by Joseph Pasternak, who oversaw a less prestigious musical unit than Freed's and one that was not as committed to the musically integrated structure.

The Nicholas Brothers *did* work in an Arthur Freed production, dancing with Gene Kelly in *The Pirate* (1948). While the film is an example of an integrated musical, the one number the Nicholas Brothers participate in is overtly a stage performance. Granted, their dance with Gene Kelly to *Be a Clown* was a cinematic first for the duo—a *racially* integrated number. Yet the racial integration came with containment. For the first time on film, the Nicholas Brothers did not perform their own material. Kelly choreographed the number with little collaboration from the brothers. This can plainly be seen when one compares the number to their work at Fox: they had to tone down their abilities to "integrate" their bodies with Kelly's.⁶⁹

Miranda and the Nicholas Brothers appeared in MGM musicals in the late 1940s because Fox decided not to renew their contracts. The Nicholas Brothers were let go in 1945; Miranda left Fox in 1946. While the early 1940s saw a proliferation of minority performers in Fox musicals, the opportunities dwindled in the second half of the decade. After World War II, the structure of the Fox musical began to change. The growing popularity of the MGM musical signaled the end of Fox's south-of-the-border potpourri films and an increased effort to duplicate the "MGM style." Fox's first such venture was *State Fair* (1945). In yet another "window number," Janey (Jeanne Crain) sits at her bedroom windowsill and sings *It Might as Well Be Spring*. This time, though, the number is an integrated soliloquy, more like *The Boy Next Door* than *No Love, No Nothing* or *Stormy Weather*. Fox hired Rodgers and Hammerstein themselves to musically integrate this tale about hog judging, pickle and pie tasting, and courtship among the young farm set. Just

as *Oklahoma!* and *Meet Me in St. Louis* had done, *State Fair* associated musical integration with white Americana. When the film opens to various characters singing “Our state fair is a great state fair,” it is quite clear that “our” refers only to people with one shade of skin pigmentation.

Even more clearly influenced by *Meet Me in St. Louis*, Fox’s *Centennial Summer* (1946) was an integrated musical about a white middle-class family attending the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. *Centennial Summer* does contain one African American performer, Avon Long, singing *Cinderella Sue*. Strikingly, his number is not musically integrated; it is presented as a stage performance. Other attempts by Fox at musical integration—*Three Little Girls in Blue* (1946), *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim* (1947), *That Lady in Ermine* (1948)—were even more conspicuously lacking in minority performers.⁷⁰

By the 1950s, the integrated musical had begun to address issues of race and ethnicity. But, rather than creating original properties about these topics, Hollywood adapted musicals that had already proven popular on the Broadway stage—*Carmen Jones* (1954), *The King and I* (1956), and *South Pacific* (1958). Intriguingly, MGM did not make these films—they were all made at Twentieth Century-Fox. These later texts contain their own complex problems in the hegemonic negotiation of race and ethnicity.⁷¹ Still, racial and musical integration *were* becoming compatible by the 1950s, something that seems not to have been the case a decade earlier. While only a select section of the population was invited to meet in St. Louis, Fox’s vaudeville aesthetic made it possible to announce that *all* the gang was here.

Notes

1. Richard Dyer, “The Colour of Entertainment,” in Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, eds., *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond* (Exeter, U.K.: Intellect Books, 2000), 25. An earlier discussion of “whiteness” can be found in Dyer, “White,” in *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993), 141–63.
2. Constance Valis Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm: The Jazz Tap Dancing of the Nicholas Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Karen Orr Vered, “White and Black in Black and White: Management of Race and Sexuality in the Coupling of Child-Star Shirley Temple and Bill Robinson,” *Velvet Light Trap* 39 (spring 1997): 52–65; Shari Roberts, “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat: Carmen Miranda, a Spectacle of Ethnicity,” *Cinema Journal* 32, no. 3 (spring 1993): 3–23; and Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
3. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 231.
4. Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 115. The reference is to Jerome Delamater, “Performing Arts: The Musical,” in Stuart Kaminsky, ed., *American Film Genres* (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum, 1974), 130.
5. Richard Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia,” in *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992), 26.
6. Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 52.
7. Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), provides a good example of such a trend. Rick Altman points out the problems of focusing exclusively on integration, but he still relies primarily in *The American Film Musical* on integrated musicals for his analysis.

- The Warner Bros. series of “backstager” musicals, with numbers directed by Busby Berkeley, stand out as the main exception to this tendency to focus on integrated musicals in academic work on the genre.
8. For further elaboration, see Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), and David Ewen, *European Light Opera* (New York: Holt, 1962).
 9. Geoffrey Holden Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from “Show Boat” to Sondheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
 10. Hugh Fordin, *The World of Entertainment!: Hollywood’s Greatest Musicals* (New York: Ungar, 1975), 118, reports that the film brought in \$7,566,000 in its initial release.
 11. Both properties are fundamental to Feuer and Altman’s discussions of “the folk musical” subgenre.
 12. Stephen Harvey, *Directed by Vincente Minnelli* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 49. Harvey (and many others who have analyzed this landmark film) points out that, while ostensibly celebrating small-town “Norman Rockwell” America, the movie contains dark currents that threaten to expose the underside of the ostensibly bucolic setting. However, the darker moments of the film serve mainly to make the rest of it all the more bright and happy—much as the nightmarish moments of Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) make the happy ending so satisfying for most viewers.
 13. Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia,” 24.
 14. Shohat and Stam present a cogent overview of the appropriation of multicultural elements by “white” culture in the American musical in their chapter “Ethnicities-in-Relation,” in *Unthinking Eurocentrism* 220–47.
 15. Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets: A Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 141–44, provides a good cursory history of the “zoot suit” riots.
 16. Fordin, *The World of Entertainment!*, 76–78. Neither *Cabin in the Sky* nor *DuBarry Was a Lady* fits precisely into either the integrated or the nonintegrated category. A lengthy nightclub sequence in *Cabin in the Sky* contains various “specialty” turns and a showcase for Duke Ellington and His Orchestra; *DuBarry Was a Lady* includes a dream sequence with a few musically integrated numbers. Each of these sequences, though, is in marked contrast in its structure to the rest of the film.
 17. Dyer, “The Colour of Entertainment,” 28, 30.
 18. Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 160.
 19. Wanda Hale, “‘The Gang’s All Here.’ Roxy’s Yule Musical,” *New York Daily News*, December 23, 1943, n.p., *The Gang’s All Here* PCA Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, Beverly Hills, California.
 20. Review of *The Gang’s All Here*, *New York Times*, December 23, 1943, 26.
 21. Howard Barnes, “On the Screen,” *New York Herald Tribune*, September 28, 1944, n.p., *Greenwich Village* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.
 22. Gerald Mast, *Can’t Help Singin’: The American Musical on Stage and Screen* (New York: Overlook Press, 1987), 228.
 23. Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 63.
 24. A cursory list of titles from the Fox canon that would fit this description of nonbackstager, nonintegrated musicals would include *Bright Eyes* (1935), *Captain January* (1936), *Stowaway* (1937), *Down Argentine Way* (1940), *Moon over Miami* (1941), *Weekend in Havana* (1941), and *Song of the Islands* (1942).

25. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (fall 1986): 64.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?*, 62.
28. Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 350–64; Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, 35; and Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 18.
29. Jane Feuer, "The Self-Reflexive Musical and the Myth of Entertainment," in Gerald Mast et al., eds., *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 486–97. Feuer's article is another example of academic work on the genre that focuses somewhat unproblematically on the MGM musical, examining *The Barkeleys of Broadway* (1949), *Singin' in the Rain*, and *The Band Wagon*. All three of these films balance between "show-making" numbers and integrated numbers.
30. Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?*, 22.
31. Rubin, *Showstoppers*, 161.
32. Among her films at Fox: *Young People* (1940), *Down Argentine Way*, *Moon over Miami*, *Springtime in the Rockies* (1942), *The Gang's All Here*, *Wake Up and Dream* (1946), and *Oh, You Beautiful Doll* (1949)
33. Martha P. Nochimson, "Betty Grable Finally Dances with Baron Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch," paper presented at Society for Cinema Studies conference, Chicago, March 11, 2000, speaks of the mixed gender messages concatenated within Grable's star persona.
34. Willella Waldorf, "'The Streets of Paris' Opens at the Broadhurst Theater," *New York Post*, June 20, 1939, n.p., Carmen Miranda Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.
35. Review of *Down Argentine Way*, *Weekly Variety*, October 9, 1940, n.p., *Down Argentine Way* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library. The review specifically acknowledges that this film, the start of the cycle of Good Neighbor musicals, was a test "to explore possibilities of substantially increasing grosses from the Latin and South American markets."
36. Of course, Zanuck and Fox often were capable of making such potentially controversial subjects marketable by softening the sharp edges. *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940) substantially evades the socialist commentary of John Steinbeck's novel; *Gentlemen's Agreement* (Elia Kazan, 1947) sees anti-Semitism as having trouble getting into the country club; and well-known "peaches-and-cream" actress Jeanne Crain plays the light-skinned African American lead character in *Pinky* (Kazan, 1949). Yet, as easy as it is to fault these films for not going far enough, Zanuck and the studio must be commended for "going there" at all at the time.
37. Fordin, *The World of Entertainment!*, 72–73, contains a quote from an interview Freed gave to an unidentified "Negro paper," indicating he attempted to reach out to the African American community: "The motion picture industry in its basic forms will never discriminate . . . more than ever before we are aware of the Negro problem and are daily moving toward a better understanding. One that in the end will result in a dignified presentation of a peace-loving and loyal people."
38. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, "Blacks, Loyalty, and Motion-Picture Propaganda in World War II," *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 383–406; Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 349, also details this campaign.
39. Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Viking, 1973), 132.
40. Roberts, "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," 10.

41. *That Night in Rio* press release, n.d., *That Night in Rio* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library. The release notes that "Gordon got hold of Gilbert Souto, Brazilian . . . technical advisor on the film, and promptly 'rewrote' the song. . . . Now it's called *Boa Noite*."
42. Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm*, 95–96.
43. "Vital Statistics on 'That Night in Rio,'" via Harry Brand, director of publicity, January 30, 1941, 5, *That Night in Rio* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.
44. "Vital Statistics on 'Week-end in Havana,'" via Harry Brand, director of publicity, August 19, 1941, 2–3, *Weekend in Havana* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.
45. "Vital Statistics on 'That Night in Rio,'" 5–6.
46. Press release (stamped by AMPAS library on April 18, 1941, although probably sent out June 17, 1940), *Down Argentine Way* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, states that

Betty Grable . . . will step immediately into the leading feminine role of "Down Argentine Way." . . . Production on the picture was set back to late June because of the emergency operation on Alice Faye, but latest advices [sic] from the star's physician are to the effect that she will not be sufficiently recovered by that time. Because of the commitments on other players in the cast it was considered inexpedient to make another change in starting date.

While this press release does not explicitly refer to Miranda, another indicates how the window of opportunity for filming her numbers figured into the production schedule. "Vital Statistics on 'Down Argentine Way,'" via Harry Brand, director of publicity, August 22, 1940, 1, *Down Argentine Way* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library:

Soon after the crew's return from Buenos Aires, another group of technicians flew to New York to spend five weeks there photographing Carmen Miranda, the Brazilian "riot," and recording the songs she sings in the picture. . . . The unusual arrangement was made necessary because Miss Miranda was under contract to a nightclub in New York and found it impossible to come to the film capital for the picture.

47. Milly Singletary, *Hilo Hattie: A Legend in Our Time* (Honolulu: M F S, 1979), 38, quotes Clara Inter (Hattie's real name) as asserting that "all I ever used was a touch of eyebrow pencil and lipstick."
48. *Dimples* advertising billing stipulation, September 21, 1936, revised, *Dimples* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, indicates that the line "Dances staged by Bill Robinson" was "required" in all advertising.
49. While the Nicholases were the primary choreographers for their scenes in Fox films, they worked in tandem with Nick Castle (who received screen credit as dance director). Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm*, 175–79.
50. Fox was not alone in this regard during the war. The revival of the revue format in film musicals also took advantage of the separation of numbers to include minority performers. Examples can be found in Paramount's *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942), Warner Bros.' *This Is the Army* (1943), and, of course, Lena Horne's rendition of *Honeysuckle Rose* in MGM's *Thousands Cheer* (1942). An excellent examination of race and class discourse in Hollywood's wartime revues is Steve Cohan, "Star Spangled Shows: The Spectacle of Popular Entertainment in Wartime Musicals," paper presented at Society for Cinema Studies conference, West Palm Beach, Fla., April 16, 1999.

51. Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes*, 121.
52. Review of *Down Argentine Way*, *Motion Picture Herald*, October 5, 1940, n.p., *Down Argentine Way* Production Code Administration Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, states that "it is the Nicholas Brothers, Negro dance team, which stops the show." The review in the *Motion Picture Daily*, October 4, 1940, *Down Argentine Way* Production Code Administration Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, seemingly reporting about the same preview, reports that "dance specialties are contributed by the Nicholas Brothers, their routine literally 'stopping the show' on preview night."
53. Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm*, 155–56.
54. *Ibid.*, 155. Hill notes that this occurred when southern theaters showed *Down Argentine Way* and indicates this happened in at least one Birmingham, Alabama, theater showing *Sun Valley Serenade* (169).
55. Review of *That Night in Rio*, *Variety*, March 7, 1941, n.p., *That Night in Rio* Production Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.
56. *Down Argentine Way* advertisement, *Movie Mirror*, November 1940, 24, *Down Argentine Way* Production Files.
57. *Down Argentine Way* Production Files.
58. John Payne would join in a chorus in a group sing on occasion but never in a spotlight solo. Don Ameche stands out as the one exception in *Down Argentine Way*, *Moon over Miami*, and *That Night in Rio*, but his acceptable singing voice is no competition for Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Miranda, or any of the specialties, and studio publicists never tried to promote his musical talents.
59. Dorothy Hechtlinger, "Rings on Her Fingers" conference with Mr. Zanuck on first draft continuity, September 26–30, 1940, 3, Fox Script Collection, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, reports that "Mr. Zanuck pointed out that *you cannot cut away from Miranda once she starts to sing.*" "Rings on Her Fingers" was retitled *That Night in Rio*.
60. Roberts, "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," 5, 9.
61. Quoted in Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm*, 149.
62. Roberts, "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," 18.
63. Letter from office of Jason S. Joy to Joseph I. Breen, January 21, 1943, *Stormy Weather* Production Code Administration Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, shows the correspondence between Fox and the PCA over the song's lyrics, plainly spelling the word as "ballin'." (In fact, the PCA requested a different change—that the word "hot" be eliminated from the line "Ain't nuthin' wrong with me, hot mama! Nuthin'!") The confirmation in the letter that the lyrics were read over the phone to a PCA official also suggests that the double-entendre may have been overlooked. The lyrics are transcribed in *Stormy Weather*, Continuity and Dialogue Taken from the Screen, June 1, 1943, Box F-835, R/3 P/8, Collection 073, Film Scripts, Special Collections, UCLA Theater Arts Library, Los Angeles.
64. *Stormy Weather*, Continuity, R/8 P/7.
65. Roberts, "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," 4.
66. Singletary, *Hilo Hattie*, 7.
67. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 34–39.
68. Letter from Zella Richardson, City of Atlanta Board of Review, to E. J. Mannix (MGM), January 8, 1944, *The Gang's All Here* Production Code Administration Files, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library. Richardson's letter

- also points out that “white” was not necessarily uniformly understood in 1940s U.S. society. While African Americans plainly worried her, she appears to have considered Latin American performers “white”: “I had the real pleasure of sitting thro the very pleasing picture THE GANGS ALL HERE and of enjoying the MANY comments such as—‘At last the Producers have realized that white people CAN be entertaining without having to inject Negroes’ and ‘Thank the Lord one picture without niggers.’”
69. Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm*, 230–31. Hill recounts that Kelly grew annoyed that Harold rehearsed the number half-heartedly, thinking that he had not mastered the steps. That Kelly grew even more irate when Harold *did* perform the steps perfectly when challenged possibly indicates Kelly’s competitiveness with the brothers.
 70. *Three Little Girls in Blue* and *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*, in their turn-of-the-century settings, again draw ties between nostalgic Americana and musical integration. *That Lady in Ermine* draws on fantasy and operetta to “justify” musical integration. (The film was the last on which Ernst Lubitsch, director of the early integrated Chevalier-MacDonald musicals, worked. Otto Preminger, who received screen credit for the film, completed it after Lubitsch’s death.)
 71. Examinations of race and ethnicity in these later musicals include Linda Donaldson, “*The King and I* in Uncle Tom’s Cabin: On the Border of the Women’s Room,” *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 3 (spring 1990): 53–68, and Bill Osgerby, “Beach Bound: Exotica, Leisure Style, and Popular Culture in Post-War America from *South Pacific* to *Beach Blanket Bingo*,” in Marshall and Stilwell, *Musicals*, 132–40.