

ABSTRACT

A Director's Approach
to the New Gershwin Musical *Crazy for You*

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In 1992, The “new” Gershwin musical *Crazy for You* premiered on Broadway to rave reviews. The musical production, adapted from the 1930 Gershwin musical *Girl Crazy*, featured a new book by Ken Ludwig, choreography by Susan Stroman, and a score compiled from the music catalog of George and Ira Gershwin. The tap-dancing comedy adapts and invokes the conventions of classic musical theatre. This thesis documents the production process and the directorial approach to *Crazy for You* performed at Baylor University in the fall of 2017.

An Homage to the Golden Age Book Musical: A Director's Approach
to the New Gershwin Musical *Crazy for You*

by

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A Thesis

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DEDICATION

To Eliza Grace Brown, the best gift ever! Who could ask for anything more?

CHAPTER ONE

The Musical and its History

Introduction

At the center of the comedic song “A Musical” from *Something Rotten* the character Nick Bottom asks, “What the hell are musicals?”¹ Through parody and satire, the song describes and enacts many of the conventions of musical theatre such as implausible situations, singing over speaking, and choral production numbers. While the sometimes seemingly ostentatious conventions of musical theatre have been fodder for comic reflection over the years, the structure, style, and directing process of these works provides a significant challenge to any contemporary director.

Crazy for You: The “New” Gershwin Musical, which premiered in 1992, embodied a fresh version of a classic musical by returning to the style and structure of “old-fashioned” musical comedy popular during the “Golden Age” of American musical theatre. It was described as “old and new Broadway at its very best.”² In this synthesis of old and the new *Crazy for You* finds its essence. Examining the libretto and its performance at Baylor University, this thesis documents the directorial process in the production of a contemporary, “old-fashioned” musical comedy through the use of

¹ Brad Oscar, Brain d’Arcy James and Rotten Ensemble, *Something Rotten!: Original Broadway Cast Recording*, Compact Disc, Ghostlight Records, 2015.

² Martin Schaeffer, “*Crazy for You*,” review of *Crazy for You*, directed by Mick Ockrent, Shubert Theatre, New York, *Back Stage*, February 28, 1992, accessed May 28, 2017, <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/ps/i.do?p=GRGM&u=txshracd2488&id=GALE%7CA12070941&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon>.

adaptation theory. The first chapter will survey the production history of *Crazy for You*, biographies of its creators, and the critical response to the show.

State of American Musical Theatre

“Musical theatre” is a broad term that encompasses everything from *West Side Story* to Cirque Du Soleil. In *Strike Up the Band: A New History of Musical Theatre*, musical theatre director and scholar Scott Miller proclaims musical theatre to be “one of the few indigenous American art forms.”³ Musical theatre grew out of the European traditions of opera and operetta, but over time these forms began to reflect the style, settings, and aesthetics of American composers, performers, and audiences. These new sensibilities led to artistic shifts which created the diverse field of musical theatre which included: opera, operetta, vaudeville, burlesques that evolved into successful revues such as the Ziegfeld Follies, musical comedies from composers such as Cole Porter and the Gershwins, and the “traditional” book musical.

These subgenres of musical theatre allow scholars to find common ground, classification, nuances, and clarity within the art form for a deeper understanding for artistic approach. In “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” Kim H. Kowalke explores the different subgenres of American musical theatre that have emerged since the 20th century. He argues the importance of recognizing “the lines demarking the borders between the various subtypes of musical theater were indistinct and constantly being redrawn as successful new models offered alternative paradigms

³ Scott Miller, *Strike Up the Band: A New History of Musical Theatre*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2007), 4.

and subtypes influenced one another.”⁴ Over the past 100 years, musical theatre has coalesced, evolved, and fractured into many subgenres such as “operetta (*A Light in the Piazza*), rock opera (*The Who’s Tommy*), poperetta (*Jesus Christ Superstar*), rockeretta (*Rent*), dance (*Movin’ Out*, *Contact*, *Dancin’*), jukebox or catalogue musicals (*Smokey Joe’s Café*, *Jersey Boys*), plays with music (*Blood Brothers*)...all entertaining, commercial, and important to the health of the theatre.”⁵ There are many characteristics and conventions shared throughout the field of musical theatre, yet the diversity within the form leads artists to approach an operetta differently than a dance show, and a revue differently than a rock opera. Each subgenre has its own stylistic and artistic milieu that must be clearly understood to make directorial decisions. As *Crazy for You* contains elements of a musical comedy, a book musical, and a jukebox musical. An analysis of these subgenres is valuable.

Musical Comedy

Musical comedy is one of the foundational genres of musical theatre in America. A descendant of operetta, musical comedy features comedic plots, dancing choruses, and a less vocally demanding score than operetta. After the emergence of vaudeville and variety shows, musical comedy attempted to create musical entertainment with a more defined structure and cohesive production. Classic musical comedies combined and augmented elements of opera, operetta, and revues into the new vernacular sensibility of

⁴ Kim H. Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” *Gamut: Online Journal of the Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic* 6, no. 2 (2013): 153, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://trace.tennessee.edu/gamut/vol6/iss2/6>.

⁵ Denny Martin Flinn, *The Great American Book Musical: A Manifesto a Monograph a Manual*. (New York: Limelight Editions, 2008), xiii.

the emerging America theatre. *No, No, Nanette* (1925), *Anything Goes* (1934), and *Babes in Arms* (1937) are examples of popular musical comedies of the time.

Classic musical comedy, specifically the 1920s “Princess shows” of Kern, Wodehouse, and Bolton, implemented a more cohesive book (or libretto). The authors of these classic musical comedies contrasted the popular revues and crafted a more cohesive production in which all artistic elements worked together to tell the story. While musical comedy transitioned away from the structure of musical revues, it still provided the audience the same variety of entertainment, but with a singular narrative. In *The Joy of Music*, composer Leonard Bernstein describes how musical comedy grew from the structure of the revue:

Musical comedy has learned a lot from revues. It has learned to treat its book in the manner of a variety of show; it has learned to take variety and unify it. This is one of the great secrets of our magic formula: to give an audience a continuous and convincing story, yet to have them leave the theater feeling that they have also had a rounded evening of fun—dancing, comedy scenes, emotional singing, gay singing, pretty girls—the works, but somehow all cleverly integrated into a good story. Variety in unity: that was the key lesson that musical comedy learned from the revue, a big step forward.⁶

The shift from revues to musical comedy was a step forward in the evolution of musical theatre. Musical theatre practitioner and scholar Nathan Hurwitz describes this process in his book, *A History of the American Musical Theatre: No Business Like It*. The “musical comedies had stronger plots and more clearly defined characters than they had in the previous decade, thanks to the Princess musicals, they were still light and breezy entertainments in which a great musical or comic moment could sidetrack the plot until

⁶ Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 168.

the book writer found their way back.”⁷ Librettists attempted to find ways to include all the common elements of other popular entertainments within one singular story. This led to shallow, superficial stories in an effort to accommodate the jokes, music, and comedic bits “needed” for each production.

The Book Musical

The book musical was born out of musical comedy. Over time, the term book musical became an umbrella term denoting the structure of a musical, rather than its genre. In *The Great American Book Musical: A Manifesto, A Monograph, A Manual*, Denny Flinn defines the American book musical as “a drama—or tragedy, comedy, or farce—presented through the elements of dialogue, lyrics, and dance, all woven together to create the seamless presentation of a story.”⁸ This unification was the original goal of musical comedy, but it was fully realized when “writers began to insist that the dialogue be realistic—even jokes should derive from character—and that the songs and dances should help forward the plot, sound native to the time and place of the setting, and derive from the psychology of the characters. And the American book musical truly arrived when these various techniques flowed smoothly in and out of each other.”⁹

Despite troubles in the 1930s with the classic musical comedy form, “throughout the decade the plot-driven musical continued to evolve, the level of integration of elements grew deeper—all the elements of production were used more and more to

⁷ Nathan Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre: No Business Like It*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 102.

⁸ Flinn, *The Great American Book Musical*, xiii-xiv.

⁹ Flinn, *The Great American Book Musical*, xiii.

service the story.”¹⁰ This evolution developed into the strength of what is called the “book musical,” which began with the premiere of *Show Boat* and was cemented with Rodger and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* (1943). In her book, *The Golden Age of American Musical Theatre: 1943-1965*, author Corinne J. Naden argues *Oklahoma!* launched the Golden Age of American musical theatre with its “perfect blend of story, music, and dance as never before... Everything was totally integrated and, for the first time, the choreography (by Agnes de Mille) actually advanced the plot.”¹¹ Kowalke echoes the idea of the book musical’s emphasis on unity. He asserts the emergence of the book musical marked a shift in “unity of tone, style, and content; the fusion of all its constituent elements into a drama characterized by a new earnestness, simplicity, and directness.”¹² This new form developed the cohesive model classic musical comedy practiced for decades by crafting productions in which all the elements developed from the story. Popular songs from one musical were no longer interpolated in a composer’s next production to secure commercial success without regard for plot. Librettos transformed into more than “mere scaffoldings, really, for hanging songs and dances on.”¹³

The Golden Age of musical theatre brought forth a plethora of successful musicals. Kowalke examines the different subgenres of the book musical and offers

¹⁰ Nathan Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 126.

¹¹ Corinne J. Naden, *The Golden Age of American Musical Theatre: 1943-1965* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 19. I am aware that all musical comedies post-*Oklahoma*, are not part of the Golden Age of musical theatre. The structure of the book musical, however, reached its pinnacle during the period. While there have been variations on the form, the skeleton of the structure created during the Golden Age of musical theatre still serves as a solid foundation for the iconic American musical comedy.

¹² Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 149.

¹³ Scott McMillin, *The Musical as Drama: A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 15.

specific examples of “self-proclaimed” musical comedies *Kiss Me, Kate!*, *Pajama Game*, *The Music Man*, and *Hello, Dolly!*¹⁴ In addition, he offers a detailed description of the comedic book musical, describing it as:

vibrant, coherent, yet lighthearted...most often set in contemporary urban America and populated with larger-than-life but familiar character types...Fast-paced, jazzy, upbeat, and bursting with energy, it valued dance and production number over legitimate singing and realistic characterization. Its style and sound tended to be synchronous with current trends in popular song and dance idioms. Clever lyrics with contemporary allusions matched the vernacular colloquialisms of its dialogue, and the distinction between speaking and singing was less marked than in the musical play, thus obviating the need for extended musical scenes to make the transition from dialogue to song. Comedy now grew out of character and situation...Addressing the audience directly in presentational mode persisted, especially in musicals whose characters were themselves performers and therefore could sing diegetically in a show-within-a-show. Several signature songs of the musical comedy were usually routinized into lengthy production numbers, which literally “stopped the show” without concern for their integration into the plot, the implied shift in metadramatic discourse, or the audience’s ability to suspend its disbelief.¹⁵

This definition of the book musical, which will be explored in greater detail in chapter two, offers insight into the various elements of storytelling used in the genre as well as some of the resulting theatrical conventions, illustrating the growth of the form from musical comedy to the book musical. Musical comedy’s loose structure and incongruent artistic elements did not allow it to function the same way as a book musical. In the end, audiences preferred the unity of the book musical and pure musical comedy was abandoned for the new form. *Crazy for You* carries on the tradition of classic musical comedy through the integration of the Gershwin score and Ludwig’s libretto working in

¹⁴ Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 154.

¹⁵ Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 159-161.

concert with Stroman's choreography to aid in the production. All the artistic elements work together as a cohesive unit in the storytelling.

The Jukebox Musical

A jukebox musical is “a subgenre that has become ubiquitous since the turn of the first century. Instead of offering new song evocative of past styles, jukebox musicals string together preexisting songs by a popular artist or group with the aid of a unifying (often frivolous) plot.”¹⁶ *Crazy for You* also follows the tradition of revues, trunk shows, and jukebox musicals that pull from the catalogs of specific composers or musical artists to create a musical. Shows like *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1978), *Five Guys Named Moe* (1990), *Smokey Joey's Café* (1995), *Mamma Mia!* (1999), *The Boy from Oz* (2003), *All Shook Up* (2005), *Jersey Boys* (2005), *American Idiot* (2010), *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (2013), and *Motown: The Musical* (2013) are prime examples of this genre. The construction of a jukebox musical is reminiscent of classic musical comedy; the script typically serves as a vehicle to get from song to song. In “After the ‘Golden Age,’” Jessica Sternfeld argues “the sounds of the past trigger nostalgia, and thus an emotional connection. This is the driving logic behind the ‘jukebox musical.’”¹⁷ This inherent nostalgia is vital to the creation of the “old-fashioned” aesthetic at the core of *Crazy for You*.

¹⁶ Jessica Sternfeld and Elizabeth L. Wollman, “After the ‘Golden Age,’” in *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 121.

¹⁷ Sternfeld and Wollman, “After the ‘Golden Age,’” 121.

The British Invasion brings the “Megamusical”

In the 1980s, “for the first time in modern American musical theater, a dominant style emerged that was not American.”¹⁸ The “British Invasion” began importing megamusicals around 1982, most notably with shows from producer Cameron Mackintosh and composer Andrew Lloyd Weber. These shows often featured sung-through scores (often a pop or rock style) and epic or historical plots,¹⁹ and extravagant marketing campaigns. Most important, however, was the prevalent use of spectacle in these megamusicals as seen in productions such as *Cats* (1981) and its large-scale scenery, *Les Misérables* (1987)²⁰ and its revolving barricade, and *Phantom of the Opera* (1988) with its falling chandelier. While American musicals struggled to find an audience, these British shows ruled the box office as commercial juggernauts. There was an overall lack of American ingenuity in the tradition of musical theatre during this period. There were some American musicals that succeeded in the early 1980s such as *42nd Street*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. As the decade progressed, Broadway musicals were expensive to produce and failed to attract audiences with shows’ subject matter. American musicals flopped sometimes running for less than ten performances on Broadway, while the spectacle-driven megamusicals garnered attention and sold-out houses. This low moment in Broadway musical history is exemplified in the 1989 Tony Award category for Best Musical, which included one original musical,

¹⁸ Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 1.

¹⁹ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 2-3.

²⁰ *Les Misérables* was composed by French artist Claude-Michel Schönberg. Despite its French roots, it was produced by English producer Cameron Mackintosh and is regularly grouped with his popular productions *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Cats*.

Starmites, and two revues, *Black and Blue* and *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*.²¹ The megamusical trend carried over into the early 1990s with the importation of *Miss Saigon* (1991) and *Sunset Boulevard* (1995).

Crazy for You, however, seemed to be a “celebratory expression of a long-awaited shift in Broadway's fortunes.”²² In his 1992 review of the musical, *New York Times* critic Frank Rich stated:

When future historians try to find the exact moment at which Broadway finally rose up to grab the musical back from the British, they just may conclude that the revolution began last night. The shot was fired at the Shubert Theater, where a riotously entertaining show called *Crazy for You* uncorked the American musical's classic blend of music, laughter, dancing, sentiment and showmanship with a freshness and confidence rarely seen during the *Cats* decade...*Crazy for You* scrapes away decades of cabaret and jazz and variety-show interpretations to reclaim the Gershwin's standards, in all their glorious youth, for the dynamism of the stage.²³

Through the cohesive blending of storytelling devices, *Crazy for You* was a return from the megamusical to the successful book musical. The book and score were two separate entities, cohesively working together to tell the story unlike the sung-through scores of the megamusicals. *Crazy for You* featured spoken dialogue between characters in its farcical book by Ken Ludwig and a tap dancing chorus choreographed by Susan Stroman.

²¹ While only having three productions nominated for Best Musical is strange, the style and structure of the shows is more significant. The award for Best Musical was created to celebrate new musical theatre works. In 1989, two of the three nominated shows were musical revues. *Black and Blue* used music from African American jazz composers. An argument could be made to view the show as a jukebox musical, a subgenre that in recent years has been celebrated at the Tony Awards with other original productions. *Jerome Robbins' Broadway* won the Tony Award for Best New Musical despite featuring vignettes of musical scenes that had already been seen on Broadway. These nominees proved the dire state of musical theatre on Broadway at the end of the decade.

²² Rich, “*Crazy for You*; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway.”

²³ Rich, “*Crazy for You*; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway.”

In his 2004 book, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen: The Last Twenty-Five Years of the Broadway Musical*, Ethan Mordden posits the “rediscovery of Musical Comedy—launched with *Crazy For You*.”²⁴ History has not proven *Crazy for You* to be the majestic return of the American book musical that Rich or Mordden foresaw.²⁵ It did, however, prove the book musical was not dead, but capable of competing with the large scale megamusicals. In a time when the British megamusicals were dominating Broadway, the artistic team of *Crazy for You* “came up with something Broadway had been missing without knowing it, the good old-fashioned musical-comedy hit.”²⁶ While some critics overestimated *Crazy for You*'s position in the musical theatre canon, its success did reflect the beginning of an artistic shift away from the megamusicals in vogue at the time.

Biographies of the Creators

Crazy for You is an amalgamation of the work of composer George Gershwin, lyricist Ira Gershwin, librettist Ken Ludwig, choreographer Susan Stroman, and director Mike Ockrent. The show is known for its Gershwin score, comedic plot, innovative choreography, and classic aesthetic. Each of these artists' work is so tightly woven into the construction of this musical it is difficult to know who to accredit with authorship. Many musicals cite the composer, but in this case, both the composer and lyricist were dead at the creation of the production. They were not actual collaborators, though their music is part of the billing of the show. Ludwig's libretto is considered original, but he is

²⁴ Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen: The Last Twenty-Five Years of the Broadway Musical*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 227.

²⁵ Now, many historians view *Rent* as the re-birth of the American musical.

²⁶ Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen*, 116.

not credited alone for the work. The script gives credit for the concept to both Ludwig and Ockrent, inspired by Guy Bolton and John McGowan's *Girl Crazy* libretto.²⁷ This is further complicated by the issue of Stroman's choreography, one of the few truly original, iconic, and defining elements of the musical. In approaching this work, it is important to have an understanding of each member of the creative team that brought this production to fruition.

George and Ira Gershwin

Ira Gershwin, born December 6, 1896, and George Gershwin, born September 26, 1898, were the oldest of four siblings. They grew up in New York City, near the Yiddish Theatre district, giving them the opportunity to attend theatrical performances there from an early age. Although neither brother graduated from college, they both found success in the music industry: George as a pianist and composer and Ira as a lyricist.

George began his career as a music plugger after quitting school.²⁸ He demonstrated new songs of other musicians in the historic music district of Tin Pan Alley²⁹ before working full time as a composer of his own music. George studied piano under the guidance of Charles Hambitzer who encouraged him to learn the classical tradition of the piano descended from Europe. It was in the combination of his classical

²⁷ Ken Ludwig, George Gershwin, and Ira Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, (New York: Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc., 1993), 1.

²⁸ A song plugger was a vocalist or pianist who was employed by a store to promote and demonstrate new sheet music available for purchase.

²⁹ Tin Pan Alley refers to a popular music district in New York City (West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in Manhattan) in the late 19th early 20th century. While the origin of the name is not full known, many believe it refers to the sound of cheap upright pianos being played at once in an effort to sell new songs. This cacophony of sound was said to be similar to that of two tin plan clanking together in an alleyway.

background and jazz influences George found his iconic sound. He had the unique ability to incorporate “blues notes from African-American music with the minor-keys and melismas of traditional Jewish music and infused this potent cocktail into both classical and popular music.”³⁰ His first major work, *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), proved to be his most famous. He followed this work with *An American in Paris* (1928); this work received mixed reviews, but has since become an orchestral standard. George Gershwin passed away July 11, 1937 from a brain tumor at the age of 38.

Ira Gershwin did not begin to work in the music industry until 1921, after dropping out of college and working as a cashier at his father’s business. Alex Aarons asked Ira to write lyrics for his upcoming production of *Two Little Girls in Blue*. By this point, Ira’s younger brother was already active in the industry, so Ira decide to write under the pseudonym “Arthur Francis,” a combination of the names of his two youngest siblings, Arthur and Frances Gershwin. His lyrics were successful and served as his entry into the industry. 1921 also marked the first time George and Ira worked together on a musical score, *A Dangerous Maid*. After his brother’s death, Ira went on to work with artists such as Jerome Kern, Kurt Weil, Harold Arlen and have three different songs nominated for an Academy Award. Ira published *Lyrics on Several Occasions* (1959) and gave the annotated manuscripts he shared with his brother George to the Library of Congress to preserve their work for future generations. Ira died August 17, 1987, at the age of 86.

The Gershwin brothers worked with a variety of collaborators, but found the greatest successes when they worked together. George wrote the score and Ira the lyrics

³⁰ Nathan Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre: No Business Like It*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 102.

for thirteen shows, four films, and a variety of other projects. Over the years, the Gershwin brothers wrote *Lady Be Good* (1924), *Oh, Kay!* (1926), *Funny Face* (1927), *Girl Crazy* (1930), and *Of Thee I Sing* (1931) (Pulitzer Prize winner for drama, 1932) and *Porgy and Bess* (1935) (with the help of librettist DuBose Hayward). However, with the exception of *Porgy and Bess*, their shows are not regularly produced. Their music continues to be revered as part of the great American song book and constantly performed. The United States Congress awarded the Gershwins with the Congressional Gold Medal in 1985 and the Library of Congress created the Gershwin Prize for Popular Song in 2007.

Ken Ludwig

Ken Ludwig, born March 15, 1950 in York, Pennsylvania, became infatuated with the theatre after his parents took him to see a show in New York City at the age of six.³¹ He carried this passion through his collegiate years, choosing to double major in English and music theory at Haverford College before attending Harvard Law School. While at Harvard, Ludwig met Leonard Bernstein who was serving as an artist-in-residence. Ludwig shared his musical compositions with Bernstein, who invited Ludwig to attend the graduate seminar in musical theatre he was teaching. After completing his law degree, Ludwig worked as a lawyer in Washington, D.C. and wrote plays in his spare time. Ludwig decided to pursue playwriting full-time after the success of *Lend Me a Tenor* (1986) on the West End (produced by Andrew Lloyd Weber) and on Broadway (1989). Ludwig went on to pen *Crazy for You* (1992), *Moon Over Buffalo* (1995), *Shakespeare in*

³¹ Michael Long, "Broadway playwright Ken Ludwig, a York native, is hitting his stride," Sunday News (Lancaster, PA), June 04, 2006, accessed August 21, 2017, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/1120FA645B9E09B0?p=AWNB>.

Hollywood (2004) and his sequel to *Lend Me a Tenor, A Comedy of Tenors* (2015).

Ludwig has received an Olivier Award (Best Musical for *Crazy for You*), three Tony Award nominations, and two Helen Hayes Awards (*Crazy for You* and *Shakespeare in Hollywood*).

Ludwig is best known for his contribution to theatre as a contemporary writer of farce, although he is leery of the term farce. Ludwig prefers to say he is building on “the great tradition” of comedy that began in ancient Greek and Roman period and continues today.³² His swiftly-paced romantic comedies are not revolutionary in their originality, but in their unapologetic lightness. They serve as a reminder that comedy, frivolity, and entertainment for entertainment’s sake is not worthless. His works reminds audiences the joy of laughter cannot be underestimated.

Susan Stroman

Susan Stroman, born October 17, 1954, is a theatre director, choreographer and performer. After majoring in theatre at the University of Delaware she moved to New York City and began working as a dancer in Broadway ensembles before deciding to focus on choreographing and directing. Her inventive choreographic work in the Off-Broadway musical *And the World Goes ‘Round* (1991) and *Liza Stepping Out at Radio City Music Hall* (Emmy nomination, 1992) opened the door for her first Tony Award for Best Choreography for her work on *Crazy for You*. She replicated this success in the West End, winning the Olivier Award for Best Theatre Choreography. It was during this time that Stroman worked with Mike Ockrent who would become her husband in 1996.

³² Ken Ludwig, “The Great Tradition in Comedy,” *Yale Review* 98 (2010), accessed June 3, 2017. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9736.2010.00653.x.

After his death in 1999, Stroman began to tackle direction as well as choreography, beginning with *The Music Man* (2000) and *Contact* (2000, Tony Award for Best Choreography and Best Musical).

Stroman is known for her inventive choreography that serves as a vital part of the storytelling. As a director she is best known for her work in musical adaptations of film work.³³ Her biggest success as a director came from the Mel Brooks musical adaptation of *The Producers* (2001). Her production was wildly successful, setting a Tony Award record with 12 wins, including awards for Best Direction, Best Choreography, and Best Musical. She followed this up with another Mel Brooks adaptation, *Young Frankenstein* (2008) that did not fare as well. Stroman continues to work on adaption of movies into musicals with her choreography and direction scene most recently in the short-lived *Big Fish* (2013) and *Bullets Over Broadway* (2014).

Mike Ockrent

British stage director Mike Ockrent, born June 16, 1946, attended Edinburgh University with the hopes of becoming a physicist, but became distracted by his interest in theatre. He began to perform professionally and was named artistic director of Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh when he was 27 years old. In London, he directed a successful and long-running production of Mary O'Malley's *Once a Catholic* (1976), *Educating Rita* (1980), and *Passion Play* (1984). In 1984, Ockrent directed a revival of the 1937 musical comedy *Me and My Girl* (1984), starring Richard Lindsay in the lead role. The show was successful and ran for several years in London before transferring to

³³ A recent exception to this would be her production of Kander and Ebb's *The Scottsboro Boys* (2010). It was nominated for 12 Tony Awards and critically praised, but struggled to find its audience, resulting in a short-lived life on Broadway.

New York City in 1986. The production ran three years on Broadway, garnering Ockrent three Tony nominations. His next project, *Crazy for You* (1992) proved even more successful. He then worked again with his wife, Susan Stroman, on the musical *Big* (1996) before dying from leukemia in 1999.

Despite a diverse career, Ockrent's greatest commercial successes came from his adaptations or revisions of old texts. With *Me and My Girl*, Ockrent knew the dated 1930's libretto would not appease a modern audience. He worked with Stephen Fry to update and revise the text. Ockrent repeated this process when he revised the Gershwins' *Girl Crazy* to create *Crazy for You*. He managed to retain the nostalgia of musical comedy while creating a piece that functioned more like a book musical.

Production History of Girl Crazy and Crazy for You

The creative team of *Crazy for You* aspired to create an "old-fashioned" musical from the beginning. This nostalgic goal rooted in the source material inspired *Crazy for You* and impacted the creators' musical, choreographic, and conceptual choices. A deeper understanding of the influence of *Girl Crazy* in the development of the original production of *Crazy for You* and the critical responses to said production were informative to me as I prepared to mount my production of *Crazy for You* at Baylor University. The influences of *Girl Crazy* and responses of notable productions of *Crazy for You* highlight the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the work while providing inspiration for new ideas and concepts.

Origins in Girl Crazy

Crazy for You is a loose adaptation of the George and Ira Gershwin musical *Girl Crazy*, which opened October 14, 1930 and ran for 272 performances. The musical featured a book by Guy Bolton and John McGowan with performances by Ginger Rogers and Ethel Merman, who was making her Broadway debut. The talent in this production extended to the orchestra which “included the yet unrecognized talents of Glenn Miller, Gene Krupa, and Benny Goodman.”³⁴ *Girl Crazy* tells the story of Danny Churchill, a playboy sent to Custerville, Arizona by his father to manage the family ranch and change his wild ways of alcohol and women. Danny seizes the opportunity and turns the family ranch into an entertainment venue. He hires Kate Forthergrill (Merman) as a singer in addition to the showgirls he has brought to the ranch. While there, however, Danny falls in love with the postmistress, Molly Gray (Rogers).

The musical’s score included Gershwin classics such as “Could You Use Me?,” “Embraceable You,” “But Not for Me,” “Bidin’ My Time,” and “I Got Rhythm.” In Merman’s Broadway debut she managed to generate buzz for her impressive performance. It was reported Merman shocked audiences during “I Got Rhythm” when “she held one note for the entire first A of the refrain while the orchestra played the melody, held the same note for the entire *second* A yet again, and stood calmly taking it in while the house went mad.”³⁵ In the arrangement of “I Got Rhythm” found in *Crazy for You*, Polly holds a note over two choruses in homage to Merman’s star turn

³⁴ Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Comedy: From Adonis to Dreamgirls*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143.

³⁵ Ethan Mordden, *Make Believe: The Broadway Musical in the 1920s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157.

performance in *Girl Crazy*. The source material proved successful in the medium of film for young stars as well. In addition to *Crazy for You*, *Girl Crazy* was adapted three times into a film, with the most noteworthy version starring Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney directed by Norman Taurog and Busby Berkeley in 1943.

Original Broadway Production of Crazy for You

After Texas millionaire Roger Horchow received the rights to a large portion of Gershwin's music, he decided to produce an updated version of *Girl Crazy*. Ken Ludwig, thrust into the spotlight after *Lend Me a Tenor's* Tony Award nomination for Best Play, was Horchow's first pick to write the revised libretto of *Girl Crazy*. Ludwig initially rejected the offer because he did not feel he knew how to write a musical. Horchow persisted and Ludwig eventually agreed to serve as librettist. Upon reviewing *Girl Crazy*, Ludwig knew the original material would not work for a contemporary audience. He thought the script "had a lot of stereotypes that we would find repugnant; it had not much of a storyline, a very thin little thread; it was like lots of little sketches, then a great song."³⁶ He decided to take a few plot points and songs from *Girl Crazy* and scour the trunk of Gershwin music to complete the rest of the show, limiting his search to only songs done by both George and Ira Gershwin. Ludwig was able to insert "the numbers and make them feel like book songs, that really told the story of the musical. I [Ludwig] got to choose the numbers, it was completely me."³⁷ Although both Mike Ockrent and Ken Ludwig are credited with developing the concept of the show, Ludwig provided

³⁶ Andrew Girvan, "Brief Encounter With...*Crazy for You's* Ken Ludwig," *What's On Stage*, August 15, 2011, accessed May 28, 2017, http://www.whatsonstage.com/west-end-theatre/news/08-2011/brief-encounter-with-crazy-for-yous-ken-ludwig_7586.html.

³⁷ Andrew Girvan, "Brief Encounter With...*Crazy for You's* Ken Ludwig."

creative oversight in the beginning stages of the transformation of *Girl Crazy* into *Crazy for You*. Ludwig was given full artistic control to select the songs, order, structure, and story for the production. Ockrent established the basic concept, but Ludwig created the world of the play in which Stroman and Ockrent had to abide. Over the production process Ludwig worked with Stroman and Ockrent in a more collaborative relationship to adjust the show as needed.

Crazy for You received its world premiere December 18, 1999 at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C., under the direction of Mike Ockrent and ran until January 18, 1992. The musical featured a libretto by Ken Ludwig, choreography by Susan Stroman, music direction by Paul Gemignani, costumes by William Ivey Long, set design by Robin Wagner, lighting design by Paul Gallo, and was produced by Roger Horchow and Elizabeth Williams. The principal roles were originated by Harry Groener (Bobby), Jodi Benson (Polly), John Hillner (Lank), Michele Pawk (Irene), Ronn Carroll (Everett), Jane Connell (Lottie), Beth Leavel (Tess), Bruce Adler (Bela), and the Manhattan Rhythm Kings (Cowboy Trio). The show treated the Washington run as an out-of-town tryout before transferring the production to Broadway. The creative team continued to work on the production, revising music, choreography, and the script. In fact, most of act two was rearranged and revised over the course of the run. On February 19, 1992, the musical opened on Broadway at the Shubert Theatre with the same cast and production team. The production was nominated for 8 Drama Desk Awards, winning Outstanding Choreography (Susan Stroman) and Outstanding Musical and 9 Tony Awards, including Best Costume Design (William Ivey Long), Best Choreography (Susan Stroman), and Best Musical. After 1,622 performances, the show closed on January 7, 1996.

On March 3, 1993, *Crazy for You* premiered at the Prince Edward Theatre in the West End. The production featured the same team listed above, but had a different cast. On the West End, the principals were played by Kirby Ward (Bobby), Ruthie Henshall (Polly), Shaun Scott (Lank), Amanda Prior (Irene), Don Fellows (Everett), Avril Angers (Lottie), Vanessa Leigh-Hicks (Tess), and Chris Langham (Bela). The production was hugely successful, garnering 7 Laurence Olivier Award nominations, winning three: Best Set Designer (Robing Wagner), Best Theatre Choreography (Susan Stroman), and Best New Musical. The musical closed on February 24, 1996.

Crazy for You went on to launch tours in North America as well as Europe, and has been translated in to several languages to be shared around the world. The musical was mounted in Japan by the Gekidan Shiki Company in 1993. It marked “the first time a show has gone to Japan before finishing its first year on Broadway. And, ‘Crazy for You’ holds the rare honor of opening here [Japan] before London’s West End.”³⁸ The show was also produced in Brazil and Sweden. *Crazy for You* continues to be a popular musical for professional theatre and academic institutions. The Papermill Playhouse Production (1999) directed by Matthew Diamond was recorded on PBS for their Great Performances series and received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Direction of a Variety or Music Program. A recent London revival of *Crazy for You* in 2011 at the Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre, which received an updated libretto by Ludwig, proved to be a hit again. The production transferred to the Novello Theatre on the West End and won the 2012 Olivier Awards for Best Costume Design and Best Musical Revival. Currently, the Watermill Theatre Company is touring their scaled down production of *Crazy for You* directed by

³⁸ Karen Regelman, “‘Crazy’ sells out to Japanese auds,” *Variety*, February 15, 1993.

Paul Hart and choreographed by Nathan M. Wright in which the company doubles as the orchestra, accompanying their fellow actors on stage.

Critical Response

Crazy for You was received positively by most critics. It was described as “loving, smart, essentially satisfying, and frothy with joy,”³⁹ a “singing, dancing, musical laughfest and extravaganza,”⁴⁰ and an “enchanted piece of escapist frivolity.”⁴¹ Many critics celebrated the production’s deviation from the trend of the British megamusicals dominating Broadway at the time. The production was hailed as “a musical comedy in the form of a musical comedy,”⁴² “mocking recent British musicals even as it sassily rethinks the American musical tradition.”⁴³

In his *New York Times* review, Frank Rich praised the show as a beacon of hope for American musical theatre, stating “in the secular land of Broadway, starved musical-theater audiences can't be blamed for at least dreaming that ‘Crazy for You’ heralds a second coming.”⁴⁴ The production served as “a model of old-school musical-comedy

³⁹ Lloyd Rose, “‘Crazy for You’: Dancing up a Storm,” review of *Crazy for You*, directed by Mike Ockrent, Kennedy Center Opera House, Washington, D.C., *The Washington Post*, May 20, 1995, accessed May 30, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1995/05/20/crazy-for-you-dancing-up-a-storm/de586227-180f-4d2a-98bf-24009c4d2bef/?utm_term=.ca2942205b91.

⁴⁰ Martin Schaeffer, “*Crazy for You*,” review of *Crazy for You*, directed by Mick Ockrent, Shubert Theatre, New York, *Back Stage*, February 28, 1992, accessed May 28, 2017, <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/ps/i.do?p=GRGM&u=txshracd2488&id=GALE%7CA12070941&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon>.

⁴¹ Simon Edge, “*Crazy for You*,” review of *Crazy for You*, directed by Timothy Sheader, Open Air Theatre Regent’s Park, London, *What’s On Stage*, August 9, 2011, accessed May 28, 2017, http://www.whatsonstage.com/west-end-theatre/reviews/08-2011/crazy-for-you_7819.html.

⁴² Disch, “*Crazy For You*.”

⁴³ Rich, “*Crazy for You; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway*.”

⁴⁴ Rich, “*Crazy for You; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway*.”

construction.”⁴⁵ Rich’s praise was flattering, but also hyperbolic. History has proven *Crazy for You* to not be a revolutionary musical that reshaped the musical theatre landscape like *Rent* (1996) or the recent juggernaut *Hamilton* (2015).

The significance of *Crazy for You* lies in its shift away from the dramatic sung-through pop scores of the “British Invasion” musicals. *Crazy for You* was grounded on the established musical compositions of George and Ira Gershwin. Their scores relied heavily on lush orchestrations, jazz influences, and songs about ordinary people and situations. The Gershwins’ style sharply contrasted the synthesized accompaniment of contemporary the pop and rock scores about dire circumstances. The interpolation of Gershwins’ musical catalog was a major asset for *Crazy for You*. Besides the musical “being a pastiche of Gershwin songs,”⁴⁶ it also managed “to take some of the greatest songs ever written for Broadway and Hollywood and reawaken the impulse that first inspired them.”⁴⁷ This “serious theme of renewal”⁴⁸ was echoed throughout the production elements.

Stroman’s acclaimed choreography also marked a return to the old-fashioned structure of the book musical. The “British Invasion” led to a “dearth of dancing on Broadway,”⁴⁹ making Stroman’s impressive choreographic Broadway debut more meaningful. Her “dance numbers felt neither antiquated nor like they were winking at the

⁴⁵ Rich, “*Crazy for You*; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway.”

⁴⁶ Disch, “*Crazy For You*.”

⁴⁷ Rich, “*Crazy for You*; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway.”

⁴⁸ Jennifer Dunning, “Crazy for Dance, a Broadway Gypsy Creates Her Own,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1992, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/16/theater/theater-crazy-for-dance-a-broadway-gypsy-creates-her-own.html>.

⁴⁹ Jennifer Dunning, “Crazy for Dance, a Broadway Gypsy Creates Her Own.”

audience, while still fulfilling the requirements of the genre: seamless integration into the story and moving the plot forward.”⁵⁰ She managed to “choreograph in a more contemporary fashion,”⁵¹ despite the 1930s period of the show. Stroman’s choice to use “homespun props, rather than an avalanche of spectacle, to turn her dances into theater,”⁵² was innovative for the time and considered as the catalyst for a “resurgence in dance on Broadway.”⁵³ Stroman’s choreography crowned her as the “real star of this production”⁵⁴ and “the real source of the show's delight.”⁵⁵

Despite the overall positive reception to the music, choreography and overall production, Ken Ludwig’s book received a mixed response. In his *Variety* review, Hoyt Hilsman claims “the basic story is so superficial that there is no emotional anchor to the show. These characters are period clichés, pure and simple. And the reluctance of the creators to plunge into full-fledged farce, rather than merely flirt with it, makes for a hollow, mechanical piece.”⁵⁶ The problems with the text, characters, and structure were voiced by other critics as well. Ludwig’s libretto was criticized for being “contrived”⁵⁷ and having “no content, other than performers performing.”⁵⁸ Others thought the libretto

⁵⁰ Stroman, “‘Crazy for You’ Revisited with Susan Stroman.”

⁵¹ Jennifer Dunning, “Crazy for Dance, a Broadway Gypsy Creates Her Own.”

⁵² Rich, “*Crazy for You*; A Fresh Chorus of Gershwin on Broadway.”

⁵³ Stroman, “‘Crazy for You’ Revisited with Susan Stroman.”

⁵⁴ Schaeffer, “*Crazy for You*.”

⁵⁵ Disch, “*Crazy For You*.”

⁵⁶ Hilsman, “Review: ‘Crazy for You.’

⁵⁷ Hilsman, “Review: ‘Crazy for You.’

⁵⁸ David Richards, “‘Crazy for You’ is Splashy, But Magical would be Better.”

was “full of dull ideas,”⁵⁹ “arthritic jokes,”⁶⁰ and a general feeling of being “decidedly antiquated today.”⁶¹ While many shared this view, some looked past it saying, “It’s so nakedly contrived, you’d be crazy to take offence.”⁶² David Richards found the jokes inconsequential stating in his *New York Times* review, “the corniness of the jokes doesn't really matter, as long as someone engaging is cracking them. The story need not surprise us, merely allow the cast to charm us. Personality counts for everything here.”⁶³

Despite the ability of some audience members to look past the deficiencies in the script, there was a consensus among critics that the libretto was shallow. Although Ludwig set out to revise *Girl Crazy* for a modern audience, with a book and score that worked in tandem to move the plot forward, the book was the weakest element of the musical. The book scenes were not as dynamic as the music and choreography, prompting the audience to feel like “every time there's an extended dialogue sequence, the production puts on the lead shoes. But the script was never designed to do much more than get the audience from one dazzling number to another.”⁶⁴ The lack of depth in the book created problems in characterization. In the original production Thomas Disch

⁵⁹ Lloyd Rose, “‘Crazy for You’: Dancing up a Storm.”

⁶⁰ David Richards, “‘Crazy for You’ is Splashy, But Magical would be Better.”

⁶¹ Jamie Portman, “Jamie Portman reviews Stratford! *Crazy For You*: Gershwin musical triumphs at the Festival!,” review of *Crazy for You*, directed by Donna Feore, Festival Theatre, Stratford, *Capital Critics’ Circle*, August 8, 2014, accessed May 28, 2017. <http://capitalcriticscircle.com/crazy-for-you-gershwin-musical-triumphs-at-stratford/>.

⁶² J. Kelly Nestruck, “*Crazy for You*: Stellar choruses plus thrilling choreography equals an exhilarating musical,” review of *Crazy for You*, directed by Donna Feore, Festival Theatre, Stratford, *The Globe and Mail*, May 28, 2014, accessed May 28, 2017. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/theatre-reviews/crazy-for-you-stellar-choruses-thrilling-choreography-make-an-exhilarating-musical/article18887367/>.

⁶³ David Richards, “‘Crazy for You’ is Splashy, But Magical would be Better.”

⁶⁴ Lloyd Rose, “‘Crazy for You’: Dancing up a Storm.”

equated problems with the character of Polly with a libretto that “offers her fewer and less rich opportunities. Her first solo, ‘Someone to Watch Over Me,’ is symptomatic--a nice song that she delivers nicely enough, but it doesn't spring from the situation or her character.”⁶⁵ In an effort to use as many of the Gershwin classics the audience will enjoy, character development became secondary to the music, a common problem in musicals crafted in the jukebox style. The dialogue becomes more of a segue than a script.

It is important to note these problems in regards to performance. Special consideration must be paid to the deficiencies in the libretto. The emotional depth and motivation of the characters is uneven since the music is not directly written for the production, and the libretto is constructed around the score. The director must create specificity, nuance, clarity, and connection in places the script does not. In this way, the troubled book prevents *Crazy for You* from truly functioning like a book musical. While the next chapter will explore the show's construction as a musical comedy and other structural elements, an examination of the musical's plot is helpful in creating a solid foundation for further analysis.

Synopsis

The action of *Crazy for You* takes place in 1930s New York City before moving to the fictional Deadrock, Nevada. It tells the story of Bobby Child, a wealthy young man from a banking family with dreams of performing on a Broadway stage, and his journey of discovery that dreams are meaningless without a love with which to share them. It is told through a classic Gershwin score, tap-dancing production numbers, and a farcical

⁶⁵ Disch, “*Crazy For You*.”

plot. The story is implausible, predictable, and ridiculous at times, but the classic Gershwin music and creative choreography overpower the shortcomings the libretto.

Act One

The play begins backstage at the Zangler theater on the evening of the closing performance of *Zangler's Follies*. Bobby arrives in just enough time to audition for Bela Zangler, the director/producer of *Zangler's Follies*, who is making advances toward the show's choreographer, Tess. Bobby auditions for Zangler ("K-ra-zy for You"), but in the final moments of his dance Bobby steps on Bela's foot and leaves the theater without booking the job.

Outside the theater, Bobby's fiancé of five years, Irene Roth, is waiting to discuss their future and encourages Bobby to give up his dream of performing. As Irene is talking with Bobby, Lottie Child, Bobby's mother, arrives and requests that Bobby travel to Deadrock, Nevada on bank business to get foreclosure documents signed. The women argue over Bobby and what he should do. Bobby, attempting to escape the situation, dreams of doing what he loves most, dancing with the Follies Girl ("I Can't Be Bothered Now"). After he returns to reality, Bobby decides to travel to Deadrock rather than stay in New York City with Irene.

The next scene is set in the center of Deadrock, Nevada, an old small mining town that is practically dead ("Bidin' My Time"). Polly Baker, the only woman in town and postmistress hands out mail while the cowboys sit around doing nothing. Everett Baker, her father, receives a letter threatening to foreclose on his property, the Gaiety Theater, if he doesn't pay the bank by the end of the month. The letter also notifies him the bank is sending a representative to Deadrock by the name of Bobby Child. Seeing the affect the

letter has on her father, Polly vows to do something “ugly”⁶⁶ to Bobby Child if she ever meets him. As Polly exits, Bobby staggers into town dying of thirst from the hour-long walk from the train station. As Bobby collapses in the town center, Lank Hawkins, the saloon/hotel owner, pressures Everett to sell him the theater so he can expand his business. Everett objects, but Lank continues pushing him, leading Polly to come to her father’s defense. Bobby sees Polly and instantly falls in love with her (“Things are Looking Up”).

Bobby is carried into the Lank’s saloon to find a hotel room and water, but witnesses a stage version of “Famous Gunfights of the Old West”⁶⁷ the cowboys are rehearsing to help attract tourists. Polly enters the bar and Bobby begins to flirt with her, making a case as to why they belong together (“Could You Use Me?”). The action continues into the street as the two dance the evening away and begin to fall in love (“Shall We Dance”).

Polly takes Bobby to the Gaiety Theater, shares its history, and explains the situation with the bank. Bobby convinces Polly he can help her save it by putting on a show with his friends from *Zangler’s Follies*. In the course of their conversation, Polly realizes she does not know Bobby’s name. He introduces himself to Polly who promptly slaps him and tells him to stay away from her. Bobby, determined to not give up on Polly, decides to pose as Bela Zangler to put on the show and win Polly’s affection.

The next scene is three days later, and begins with the Follies Girls, currently on vacation, entering Deadrock (“Girls Enter Nevada”) and Bobby entering disguised as Bela Zangler. Bobby convinces the cowboys to perform in the show and promptly begins

⁶⁶ Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 16.

⁶⁷ Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 19.

rehearsals despite Lank's objection. Everett tells Polly Bela is the type of man she should marry and encourages her to find someone with whom to settle down, causing Polly to contemplate her loneliness ("Someone to Watch Over Me").

Scene eight is two weeks later and rehearsals are well underway for the production, but all is not going well. The cowboys are slow to pick up the choreography. Bobby steps in to shape the production number for the show ("Slap That Bass"). After a productive rehearsal Irene shows up looking for Bobby. She recognizes him despite his disguise as Bela and demands he leave with her and go back to New York City the next day. As Bobby, disguised as Bela, tries to convince Polly to give Bobby another chance, Polly confesses her love for Bela ("Embraceable You"), complicating Bobby's plan.

Opening night arrives and the cast is excited to put on their show for an audience ("Tonight's the Night"). The only people that arrive with the train, however, are Eugene and Patricia Fodor, and they did not buy a ticket to the show. They are creating a guidebook to the American West and are there to visit Lank Hawkins Saloon, Bar, Hotel, and Restaurant. Bobby apologizes to the cast for failing them by not selling any tickets. Polly encourages everyone to celebrate what they have achieved. The group of "lazy drifters" has transformed into a group of people who have "been working together, and carin' about things and feelin' alive!"⁶⁸ They celebrate their new lease on life ("I Got Rhythm"), but in the final moments of the impromptu revelry the real Bela Zangler enters dying of thirst and collapses in the street, unseen by everyone.

⁶⁸ Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 45.

Act Two

Act two continues the action fifteen minutes after the end of act one. The citizens of Deadrock move the celebration from the street into Lank's saloon ("The Real American Folk Song"). As his guest eat and drink, Lank attempts to see to the needs of his demanding guests, the Fodors, as well as Irene Roth. Bobby proclaims his love to Polly, but she explains to him that she is in love with Bela. Bobby attempts to win Polly's heart by confessing to posing as Bela Zangler, but Polly does not believe him. As Bobby attempts to prove he is telling the truth, the real Bela Zangler walks in to the saloon. Polly gives him a kiss and exits, leaving Bela confused and Bobby heartbroken. After gaining his bearings, Bela endeavors to win Tess's heart by telling her his wife has left him and he is now available for a relationship. Tess asks for his help in producing the show in Deadrock, but Bela refuses saying, "It wouldn't work! This is town of morons!"⁶⁹ The cowboys in the bar then break into their version of The Dalton Boys meet the Clanton Gang gunfight. A frightened Bela begins to drink his troubles away as a drunk Bobby, in his Bela disguise, enters the saloon from his hotel room. The two are too drunk to realize the other is not their reflection in the mirror as they discuss their current woes ("What Causes That?")

The next morning Polly enters the bar to deliver the mail and sees the two Bela Zanglers passed out on the floor. She recognizes Bobby told her the truth, but feels foolish for being lied to for so long. She slaps Bobby and leaves hurt and confused. Irene enters demanding Bobby make time for her, but he refuses stating his love for Polly and ending their engagement. Bobby prepares to go to the town meeting to decide what to do

⁶⁹ Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 52.

about the show. An angry and frustrated Irene kisses Lank in a moment of passion and proceeds to seduce him (“Naughty Baby”).

At the town meeting, Bobby attempts to convince the citizens to continue with the show. A dejected Polly disagrees, but Bobby struggles to sway her and the other townspeople who want to give up on saving the theater. Patricia and Eugene Fodor offer their words of British wisdom and encouragement to persevere through hard times (“Stiff Upper Lip”). The citizens vote to cancel the show, leaving Bobby and Polly alone in the Gaiety Theater. Bobby tells Polly he is returning to New York (“They Can’t Take That Away From Me”). After Bobby leaves, Polly is alone and laments her lost love (“But Not For Me”). Bela Zangler enters with Tess and a few of the cowboys announcing that he will produce the show for Tess. He writes checks for advertising and casts Polly as the lead in the show since Bobby has left for New York City.

The scene shifts to New York City, six weeks later. Bobby is working for his mother, but his head and heart are not in banking. In an attempt to cheer him up, Lottie gives Bobby the deed to the bank’s newest piece of foreclosed property, the Zangler Theater. Bobby realizes Bela gave up the life he has dreamed of forever to be with Tess, leaving him to ponder the value of his dream without Polly (“Nice Work If You Can Get It”).

The action returns to Deadrock, Nevada, which has been revitalized by the Zangler’s production. Moments before the night’s performance Polly rushes to catch the train to New York City in an effort to rekindle her romance with Bobby. As the company decides what to do with the show, Bobby arrives with Lottie and their chauffer in a final attempt to win Polly’s heart. Hearing that he has missed her, Bobby decides to catch the

first train back tomorrow. Everett notices Lottie and falls instantly in love with her (“Things are Looking Up Reprise”). When Bobby goes into Lank’s saloon to wash-up, Polly enters exclaiming she missed the train. The cast quickly puts a plan in motion to reunite Bobby and Polly and they dance the evening away (“Finale”).

Conclusion

Mordden describes *Crazy for You* as “what the musical was supposed to be when the nation fell in love with the form: entertainment.”⁷⁰ Despite some harsh criticism and faults in the libretto, this Gershwin revival is hailed as an old-fashioned American musical. It retains the stylistic elements of a glorious score, comedic plot, and exciting choreography. *Crazy for You* pays homage to the past as a modern version of an old form. It is this balance of the old and the new—its nostalgia—that still resonates with audiences today. The following chapters document the process of producing *Crazy for You* at Baylor University from critical analysis through audience reception. This thesis will provide the theoretical and directorial approach to this work, the collaborative process of design, and rehearsal techniques used in the mounting of this production.

⁷⁰ Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I’ve Ever Seen*, 116.

CHAPTER TWO

Analysis of the Musical

Introduction

In preparing to direct *Crazy for You*, my research led me to view the play as an homage to American musical comedy. Viewing the show through this lens provided a way to understand the structural and artistic influences woven into the play's construction while creating a foundation for directorial choices. The billing as the "new" Gershwin musical brings to the forefront the mixing of the old and new, contemporizing the "old" form of the musical comedy and book musical. This idea of re-packaging nostalgia is part of the show's construction, plot, and theme. This chapter defines the elements of structure, characterization, and theatrical conventions within musical-comedies and Golden Age book musicals to identify ways in which *Crazy for You* blends these styles in an homage. Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation was helpful in understanding the power of nostalgia through adapted material. Her theories provided a clear theoretical approach to the material, shaped artistic choices, and synthesized the old and new for my production of *Crazy for You*.

Dramatic Structure

Musical theatre functions differently according to its subgenre. *West Side Story* functions differently than *Hello Dolly*; *Miss Saigon* functions differently than *The Producers*. Each subgenre has its own common structure and conventions. The previous chapter discussed the development of the musical from the operetta to the birth of the

1930s musical comedy, but the term “musical comedy” is a large umbrella term that many people use to refer to the musicals of the 1920 and 30s such as *Girl Crazy* as well as the comedic book musicals of the Golden Age. While both periods of musical theatre refer to comedic musical productions, there are structural, musical, and differences of theatrical conventions between the two subgenres. Directing *Crazy for You* serves as an impetus to clearly examine these two periods and evaluate how their unique characteristics are blended together within the construction of *Crazy for You*.

Attributes of the Classic Musical Comedy

In *The Joy of Music*, Leonard Bernstein posits “the glittering world of musical theatre is an enormous field...And somehow in that great mass of song and dance and drama lies something called the American musical comedy—a magic phrase.”¹ The musical comedy holds a special place in the musical theatre canon, and continues to endearingly hold the prefix of a “good old-fashioned musical comedy.”² The tap dancing chorus, farcical plot, and Gershwin score work together in the creation of the nostalgic aesthetic that informs the style of the production. Yet, by today’s standards, the classic musical comedy would be a “thinly plotted excuse for the presentation of an array of stars, spectacle, and song.”³ These musicals were loosely structured, making them difficult to classify and categorize except in general terms and common occurrences. Mordden describes some of the common plots of the 1930s musical comedies as:

¹ Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 152.

² Flinn, *The Great American Book Musical*, xiii.

³ Kim H. Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” *Gamut: Online Journal of the Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic* 6, no. 2 (2013): 137, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://trace.tennessee.edu/gamut/vol6/iss2/6>.

There was the rustic-conquers-the-city premise; also its converse, the slicker-among-the peasantry tale. Most dependable of all was the engagement-threatened-by-a-snap setup, with farcical plot development involving mistaken identity, jokes about marriage and politics, out-of-story gags such as byplay with the orchestra (who by logic's rights are not part of the narrative reality), the sudden appearance of dancers who don't even bother to check into the plot before launching their act, and other extraneous fun.⁴

Many of these musicals proved commercially successful by entertaining audiences with repetitive plots, jokes, and musical numbers that digressed from the plot. Classic musical comedies “were not built to last...Single songs, stripped of their original dramatic identities, were often the only elements of a show to survive long enough to leave a mark on national culture.”⁵ Similarities between shows prohibited productions from achieving much beyond commercial success; they were a dime a dozen. Composers, not the shows, enticed audiences to attend. After a successful score, a composer could depend on those songs to live on even when a show did not. The nostalgia of these successful scores, as seen in the Gershwins' music for *Crazy for You*, continues to effect audiences today.

It was clear the music was the most important element of these productions. Kowalke described the musical comedy score as “rarely more than a collection of self-contained songs of varied style and character arranged in a running order along narrative lines and attuned to the latest trends in popular music and dance.”⁶ The scores were written in “the standard thirty-two bar ‘popular song form,’”⁷ and often had no connection to the plot of the production. Songs were more for entertainment than to

⁴ Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen: The Last Twenty-Five Years of the Broadway Musical*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3.

⁵ Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen*, 138.

⁶ Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen*, 145.

⁷ Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen*, 137.

advance the plot; the music of a production held the power to make a show a hit. If a song was successful in one production, it was often “placed in a new musical to help assure its success.”⁸ It was customary in musical comedies to credit “book and lyrics as separate items rather than as a co-authored libretto.”⁹ This divided method of show construction led to a lack of “continuity between what was sung and what was spoken”¹⁰ and other creative elements such as choreography. The composers, librettists, directors, and choreographers did not assemble the show with one cohesive vision. The choreography in musical comedies was one of the biggest examples of the disjointed artistic vision and did not do much to advance the narrative. Shows typically “began with a chorus number in order to establish the ensemble convention” and helped “to put the chorus girls on display from the start,”¹¹ but that was the extent of their function in the storytelling.

These shows were designed to entertain the audience through the music and humor of the day. In the construction of classic musical comedies, authors attempted to select the elements to interpolate into the libretto and write a script that was flexible enough to allow the action of the plot to unfold. In these shows “books serve the great songs, rather than the other way around. This is a reversal of the musical theatre of today. The stories of the 1920s seem silly and frivolous to us because of this.”¹² Although the music was great, the weak librettos and lack of integration between artistic areas did not truly achieve the unified stories musical comedies set out to tell.

⁸ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 102.

⁹ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 144.

¹⁰ Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 145.

¹¹ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 80.

¹² Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 102.

Book Musical Structure and Conventions

The book musical found much of its strength as an artistic form from the structure provided by the libretto. Unlike the musical comedy, the libretto of the book musical unified all the elements of a musical production. A book musical is “usually non-continuous and non-Aristotelian in its layout, more a carefully constructed sequence of fragmentary, interrelated episodes than a traditional dramatic narrative.”¹³ Many times these shows have climatic moments related to their common romantic plot lines but still function within an episodic structure. There are four vital moments that happen during these shows.

The first is the opening number in which “the audience must be immediately engaged by an intriguing and intelligible exposition of what the evening holds in store.”¹⁴ This number offers exposition, illustrates the style of the production, and helps the audience establish their horizon of expectation. The next pillar in the structure is the end of act one. The first act should “end with sufficient dramatic tension to bring the audience back after intermission; the final musical number of the act is often a crucial turning point for a principal character, one that will set in motion the events of the second act.”¹⁵ This can be a cliffhanger, a rift between a romantic couple, or a new complication to the plot. The opening of act two reacquaints the audience to the world of the play, typically with an upbeat musical number. Finally, the conclusion of the musical usually offers a satisfying, happy ending. Within these episodes the book musical maintains the variety of

¹³ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 168.

¹⁴ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 171.

¹⁵ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 171.

the classic musical comedy by presenting a variety of up-tempo numbers, ballads, solos, duets, and production numbers which maintain interest while creating a seamlessly integrated production.

The structure of the book musical is derived from the libretto, whose plots commonly centered on romantic relationship between the leading men and women.

Kowalke posits:

The key conventions of the musical book are binary opposition and repetition. Musicals are almost always about pairs, complementary halves of a whole, initially at odds... Musicals often treat courtship, the attempt to convince another to adopt one's attitudes or to adapt one's own actions to another, as a metaphor for life itself.¹⁶

The structure of the book musical and the libretto work in tandem to present clear oppositions between characters' background and ideology through a variety of methods such as "pervasive splitting of focus through paired songs; parallel scenes, locations, and situations; analogous activities; contrasting gender-based ensembles; complementary costuming; and binary thematics (freedom versus order, self-interest versus family, progress versus stability, pleasure versus responsibility, etc.)."¹⁷ Many of the Golden Age musical comedies exemplify a clear distinction or difference between locations, themes, aesthetic styles, and love interest. The binary oppositions often add comedic affect to the conflict in musical comedies. The prevalent use of this device in the structure of this subgenre helped standardize the form and create a sense of predictability in the plots of musical comedies. Audiences could quickly recognize which characters would end up

¹⁶ Kowalke, "Theorizing the Golden Age Musical," 169.

¹⁷ Kowalke, "Theorizing the Golden Age Musical," 170.

together by the end of the show so they could enjoy the humorous conflicts with the assurance of a happy ending.

Most musical comedies and book musicals have expected endings, “unfolding of plot is not the primary focus: characterization is.”¹⁸ The characterization becomes the point of interest instead of the plot. In the book of these musicals, the characters “participate in such polarities as they negotiate between their exterior and interior selves, with the hidden, neglected aspects of personality (often revealed only in ‘I am’ or ‘I want’ songs) corresponding to the needs or attitudes of the other member of the pair.”¹⁹ The foundational binary opposition is present externally between characters; it also exists internally as characters struggle between their public and private personas. The structural conceits and binaries not only effect the script of these Golden Age musical comedies, but also several of the theatrical conventions used as storytelling devices over the course of the musical.

The scores of book musicals functioned in many of the same ways as classical musical comedy. For both genres, the music seemed to be the defining factor in the success of the production. Yet unlike musical comedies, book musicals no longer allowed a song’s previous popularity to dictate their scores. Composers worked to compose a score reflective of the setting, style, character, and theme of the overall work; the score was now present in the story. It is in this period the music begins to serve the book, unlike in classic musical comedy. The score begins to aid in the storytelling by advancing the plot and communicating the emotional truth of the characters.

¹⁸ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 170.

¹⁹ Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre*, 170.

In *The Musical as Drama: A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim*, Scott McMillin explores the conventions that help make the book and score work with an audience. McMillin argues the book musical marked the transition “of turning Broadway’s skill at song-and-dance routines into a new format in which the numbers had important work to do because they were being inserted into the book as a different element, a change of mode, a suspension of the book in favor of music.”²⁰ The foundation of many of his arguments fall in line with the binaries Kowalke described as foundational to the libretto of a book musical. The librettos of book musicals solved the problem of this suspension or justification of characters bursting into song and dance by establishing two methods. The first method is making a song diegetic, meaning “numbers that are called for by the book. It is meant to cover the backstage musicals plus any other occasions on which characters deliberately perform numbers for other characters...The diegetic number is not a case of someone ‘bursting into song.’ Rather, someone has a song to sing, according to the book, and goes ahead and sings it.”²¹

The other is a more theoretical conceit to cover characters who begin to sing “out of the blue,” or non-diegetically. McMillin states the goal of “breaking into song (or dance) is to double the characters into the second order of time, the lyric time of music, so that they gain a formality of expression unavailable to them in the book.”²² For McMillin, a non-diegetic song is a suspension of reality because it “gives its characters a

²⁰ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 5.

²¹ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 103-104.

²² McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 20.

dimension that lies beyond realism...The numbers interrupt our normal sense of character and plot with song and dance, and what we are left with is not the 'one' but the 'multiple.'"²³ Reality is suspended as the song is sung out of real-time on stage. The audience is given access into the inner thoughts and feelings of the character singing in ways the other characters are often not privileged to hear. These non-diegetic songs establish a duplicate version of the character according to McMillin, the public and the private persona of the character. This duplication is another binary within the musical, public or external (diegetic) versus private or internal (non-diegetic). This non-diegetic duplication is heightened to exist in a poetic world and capable of musical expression. These opposing methods of song are not exclusive. It is common to see both diegetic and non-diegetic songs within the same production. This method of song justification was an artistic leap forward from the classical musical comedies that were fine without developing a strong connection between the song, script, and character.

The orchestra also served a conventional role in the book musical. McMillian presents his take on Wagner's idea of the "omniscient orchestra" that "knows what is in the minds of the characters even before the characters."²⁴ There is an inherent triangle of trust between the orchestra, performers, and audience. All parties believe that the orchestra will guide them through the musical journey. The orchestra knows what both parties need and acts accordingly. The orchestra, under the guidance of the conductor "knows when to introduce the numbers, when to bring them to a close, when to keep the beat, when to keep quiet. It knows the difference between book time and number time,

²³ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 21.

²⁴ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 130.

and it knows how to set the two apart, or lead from one to the other...The orchestra is infallible element of a musical, the agent that always knows what is coming and never misunderstands a character or a turn of the plot.”²⁵ This belief presupposes that the music prompts or responds to moments of realization and growth in the characters. It is often the sound of the orchestra that prompts characters to recognize they are in love, have an idea, or need to dance out of sheer joy. This is a subtle but important convention of the book musical. The orchestra is not an invisible part of a production but an essential part of the storytelling within the production.

The book musical also sees the emergence of choreography as a storytelling device working in conjunction with the musical score. The book musical marked the “elevation of dance (from its traditional functions as novelty, spectacle, or mere occasion for displaying the legs of chorus girls) to near-equality with music, lyrics, and book in advancing plot and revealing character.”²⁶ This method expanded on the treatment of choreography in musical comedy. It “preserved in the production number dance’s capacity to overwhelm with spectacle, utilized narrative dance to replace dialogue and advance plot, drew upon as wide a range of styles and idioms as did music, developed its own repertory of comedic conventions, and, like music, exploited the possibilities of historical styles (especially tap) and intertextual pastiche.”²⁷ While the musical score continued to be a highlight of the Golden Age musical comedy, it also allowed for the development of choreography to move beyond a showcase of beautiful chorus girls to a functional piece of storytelling within the production.

²⁵ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 127.

²⁶ Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 134.

²⁷ Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 179.

Crazy for You as an Homage

Crazy for You functions as an homage to the classical musical comedy and Golden Age of musical theatre. It is constructed like a classic musical comedy but functions conventionally as a book musical. This combination of formats is illustrated in its billing as “The ‘new’ Gershwin musical,” despite both Gershwins being dead for years prior to the premiere of the production. While this billing is an attempt to attract a new audience with the established notoriety of classic Broadway composers, it also points to the blending of two different styles, the old and the new. The creators knowingly return to the musical comedy style while allowing the characters to function within the world of the book musical. As Stroman noted, this show “is not a spoof of its genre, but a loving re-creation of a period show.”²⁸ When viewed in this light, it is easier to look past the show’s shortcomings and embrace rather than fight them.

Crazy for You borrows its musical sensibilities and book structure from classic musical comedy. The use of Gershwin music naturally harkens back to its source. Like classic musical comedies, the script was crafted around the songs, making it secondary to the score. As previously mentioned, Ludwig’s libretto was ridiculed for its lack of depth, a criticism shared with most classic musical comedies. The plots of these plays were loose and ridiculous enough to allow comedy to ensue at any moment throughout the entirety of a performance. McMillin states these “shows were always comedies, romantic comedies in their conclusions and would-be farces in their pacing. Often they contained a kind of inner revue—a nightclub scene, a ballroom scene, a garden party scene, a theatre

²⁸ Jennifer Dunning, “Crazy for Dance, a Broadway Gypsy Creates Her Own,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1992, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/16/theater/theater-crazy-for-dance-a-broadway-gypsy-creates-her-own.html>.

scene—episodes that allowed singers, dancers, and comics to take the stage as part of the narrative. This device has never ceased to be useful, and it developed into the backstage musical.”²⁹

It is easy to see how *Crazy for You* is born from this type of musical theatre. While the show is not set backstage the whole time, it is about producing, rehearsing, and performing theatre. It provides opportunity for diegetic song and dance as actors rehearse and perform numbers for their upcoming production. Its plot centers on the love between Bobby Child and Polly Baker with a comedic and farcical plot that moves swiftly towards its happy ending for all involved.

In his thesis entitled “A Director’s Approach to Ken Ludwig’s *Moon Over Buffalo*,” Nicholas Hoenshell documents the history of farce in an effort to define it in the absence of “an agreed upon scholarly definition.”³⁰ He argues that there are five commonalities between farces. According to Hoenshell:

These typical characteristics include: (1) the plot typically extends beyond nature and plausibility; (2) the plot prefers actions over character development; (3) confusion and mistaken identity are glorified through comic dress; (4) farce has a knack for violence and inflicting pain onto its characters in order to correct certain social behaviors; and (5) sex and adultery are historically common, accepted, and anticipated themes in the genre.³¹

This list is not exhaustive but pertinent to Ludwig’s writing aesthetic and structure of the musical. The farcical elements present in *Crazy for You* work in conjunction with the musical’s structure and conventions to inform matters of pace, style, and characterization.

²⁹ McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, 17.

³⁰ Nicholas Hoenshell, “A Director’s Approach to Ken Ludwig’s *Moon Over Buffalo*” (master’s thesis, Baylor University, 2016), 24.

³¹ Nicholas Hoenshell, “A Director’s Approach to Ken Ludwig’s *Moon Over Buffalo*,” 24.

Each of Hoenshell's five elements is visible in the libretto of *Crazy for You*. As previously mentioned, the plot of musical comedies—often musicals in general—are implausible. In this case, the plot points of love at first sight exemplify the epitome of implausibility. Bobby arrives in Deadrock and immediately falls in love with Polly. Despite her tough demeanor, Polly falls for both Bobby and his impersonation of Bela without caution. The characteristic of action over character is exemplified in the lack of fully realized characters in the libretto. This idea will be explored further later in this chapter. The comedic device of mistaken identity from Bobby's impersonation of Bela Zangler and the resulting confusion exemplifies Hoenshell's third characteristic of farce. Sexuality is awakened in Deadrock when the showgirls arrive. Prior to their arrival, Polly was the only girl in town, but their presence allows for coupling to be part of the town again. In addition to the romance between Bobby and Polly, Zangler wishes to have an adulterous affair with Tess, Irene sets her eyes on Lank, and the cowboys chase after the Zangler girls. Hoenshell's final element of violence is less pronounced in *Crazy for You*. Irene's vamp of Lank during "Naughty Baby" straddles the line between both sex and violence, while other acts of violence in the show are softened to the realm of performance as the cowboys rehearse the gunfights of the Wild West. Danger is never a real threat for the characters or the audience who knows the genre always provides a happy ending.

The farcical plot and interpolation of the Gershwin catalogue works as a musical comedy but the conventions used in the storytelling come from the book musical. The creators of *Crazy for You* attempted to weave the book, music, and choreography into one cohesive production. As every area was not completely successful the tension between

the classic musical comedy and book musical is present in the work. The book is dominated by the convention of binary opposition between principal characters all the way through the ensembles. Musically the opposition is illustrated through the use diegetic songs (“Slap that Bass”) and non-diegetic songs (“Someone to Watch Over Me”). Ludwig also hits the four pillars of the book musical structure. The opening provides a big dance number that provides exposition and sets expectations for the night (“I Can’t Be Bothered Now”). The first act ends with an extended tap dancing production number and introduces a new complication to the plot, so the audience leaves energized and curious as to what will happen in act two (“I Got Rhythm”). Act two opens with a celebratory number with the company (“Great American Rag”) and the show ends with a Ziegfeld-esque finale production number.

Perhaps the most significant shift between the classic musical comedy and the comedic book musical present in *Crazy for You* is the treatment of choreography. In *Broadway Stories: A Backstage Journey Through Musical*, Marty Bell documents an early rehearsal of *Crazy for You* and describes “much of the storytelling in this production is in the dance, and the steps have been designed for the specific characters.”³² Stroman’s choreography pays homage to classical musical comedy with the use of the beautiful Zangler Follies girls, a fictional version of Ziegfeld’s Follies. This is a tongue in cheek way to play with the old idea of musical choreography just being an opportunity to show off the chorus girls. Stroman’s choreography, however, moved beyond the mission of purely displaying the chorus girls. It managed to hit the style of the classic musical comedy with the use of show girls, tap dancing, and extended production numbers, but

³² Marty Bell, *Broadway Stories: A Backstage Journey Through Musical Theatre*, (New York: Limelight Editions, 1993), 123.

also aided in the storytelling. As Polly and Bobby dance in “Shall We Dance,” they fall in love. All their previous words in “Could You Use Me,” were bickering and one-upping the other. Yet, in the next song (there is no dialogue between songs) they fall in love while dancing in the desert. Stroman’s choreography manages to both impress the audience, further the story, and serve as a visual representation of the homage to the style of the classic musical comedy and conventions of the book musical crafted into *Crazy for You*.

Character Analysis

As previously mentioned, binary opposition serves as the major convention of the Golden Age musical. Yet the plot of *Crazy for You* is aligned with the conventions of the book musical and musical comedy farce structure. The characters are rooted in binary opposition, but broadly painted to allow for maximum amount of comedy. This leads to holes in characterization and the plot that are glossed over in an effort to maintain a degree of plausibility for the characters and a quick pace.³³ Audience members typically know how the story will end within the first fifteen minutes of a performance, so how these characters oppose one another and find themselves on common ground over the course of the show is more interesting than the plot itself. Each character has a function within the comedic story that supersedes the character’s personal depth or growth in the show, which supports Hoenshell’s second attribute of farce. As a result, most of the characters in this show are shallow and two-dimensional. Since they do not change, their behavior and interactions must be heightened to purposefully reflect the comedic nature

³³ It is important to note the plot should seem plausible to the characters within the world of the play to achieve the earnestness that is characteristic of the musical comedy, despite the audience being aware of the ridiculousness of the plot.

of the world of this musical. This section will examine the polar attitudes of the few characters that change over the course of the musical and the functions of the characters that remain stagnant.

Primary Characters

Bobby Child. Bobby Child is the protagonist seeking fulfillment and satisfaction through his dream of performing on stage. At the beginning of the musical, Bobby is struggling to escape his unhappy, dissatisfied life as a banker and become a Broadway performer. He knows he has what it takes to perform, but can't seem to seize his opportunity. He rejects the idea of money and business as paramount, finding himself stuck between the business world he lives in and the theatrical world he wants to join. By the end of the play, Bobby is no longer struggling in his dissatisfied life. He realizes the love of Polly is more important than performing on stage because achieving his dream will mean nothing without having Polly by his side.

Bobby's character is most clearly developed through his duality as Bobby and his fake persona of Bela. The performativity of his role as Bela Zangler serves two functions within the story. His Bela disguise creates the comedic device of the mistaken identity, which is common in the development and complication of farcical plots. His dual identity frees Bobby to live out his dream of performing. As Bela, Bobby vacillates between the power and authority assigned to Bela and the charming insecurity of his normal demeanor, while always maintaining his showman mentality. Bobby, however, is not fulfilled when he achieves his performance goals. He is unable to have both his dream and the love of Polly disguised as Bela. After receiving the deed to the Zangler Theater,

Bobby realizes his dream and Polly are connected, having one without the other is not satisfying. He learns he must unify both his dream and desire to truly be fulfilled.

Polly Baker. Polly is a primary antagonist pining for a life of her own. At the beginning of the musical, Polly is content with being self-sufficient and on her own. As the only girl in Deadrock, she has developed a tough and feisty demeanor while maintaining her nurturing characteristics. She is extremely protective of her father and took over the role of caregiver since the death of her mother many years ago. She is content to take care of her father and look after the other citizens of Deadrock. Inside, however, she is lonely. Much of her life is about others, but there is no one to care for her. She is a natural performer, a trait that seems to have been inherited from her mother. By the end of the play, Polly is ready to leave Deadrock and pursue a life with Bobby. She realizes the well-being of her father and revitalization of the town are not enough to satisfy her. She needs her partner in the world and that is Bobby.

Polly works in opposition to Bobby, despite the fact they are destined to be together by the end of the production. Bobby and Polly are binary oppositions in their home, social class, and expected gender roles. She lives the rural mining town of Deadrock, Nevada, which is in sharp contrast to Bobby's urban home in New York City. Polly comes from a humble, blue-collar upbringing, while Bobby inherits wealth from his family. Polly is nothing like the women Bobby is normally around. She is rough around the edges, resourceful, practical, hard-working, and not afraid of getting dirty doing manual labor. She is considered "one of the guys;" Bobby does not know how to do any of the cowboy duties Polly does daily. She warns Bobby in Deadrock, "the birds would

bore you, the cows won't know you, a horse would throw you."³⁴ Yet these differences prove not be enough to keep the two apart.

Bela Zangler. Bela is the man Bobby aspires to be. At the beginning of the play, Bela is used to getting what he wants. He is a successful Broadway producer. Bela typically holds the position of power in most social circles and is rarely out of control. The only exception to this is his love of Tess, who refuses his advances because he is married. By the end of the play, Bela has given up his successful life in New York City for the love of his life, Tess. He lets his theater in NYC foreclose and Bobby realizes, "He's doing it for Tess."³⁵ Once again, success means nothing without a love to share it with.

Bela has two opposing sides of himself that operate in sharp contrast to one another. There is the powerful public persona of the Broadway producer and the private persona that is insecure and willing do anything to win back Tess. Much like Bobby, Bela learns that the success and power means nothing without Tess by his side. He merges his two personas when he decides to produce his show in Deadrock for Tess instead of returning to Broadway. There is also the unique relationship between the real Bela Zangler and Bobby's version of Bela. Although they are playing the same person, the audience finds joy in identifying the way in which they differ from one another physically. In addition to these physical bits, humor emerges from the fact the text acquires a double meaning depending on which "Bela" is speaking, a common comedic device.

³⁴ Ken Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 21.

³⁵ Ken Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 71.

Secondary Characters

Irene Roth. Irene, the wealthy fiancé of Bobby Child for the past five years, is poised, classy, powerful, and domineering. She is part of the upper echelon of New York City society and constantly concerned about her appearance. One of the elements she loves most about Bobby is his willingness to allow her to control him. Conflict arises when Bobby ventures out on his own path. When Bobby breaks their engagement, she directs her attention to Lank, the top businessman in Deadrock. She craves control and will do whatever it takes to preserve it. She is an alpha female and will fight for the title.

She is in opposition to Lottie despite coming from the same social class and urban area. Both women have differing views of what is best for Bobby. This conflict serves as the catalyst for Bobby to visit Deadrock on business. At the end of the show, the women continue to clash over Irene's relationship with Bobby, despite both Bobby and Irene being involved in new healthy romances. They are one of the few opposing pairs that never find common ground. In Deadrock, Irene works in sharp contrast to Polly in her dominating demeanor, social class, and overt sexuality. Irene is threatened by the way Bobby acts towards Polly and attempts to intimidate her into submission. Polly, although not as harsh as Irene, does not back down. Despite their differences the two are equally matched. Polly's caring heart wins Bobby, while Irene's ambitious spirit dominates Lank.

Lank Hawkins. Lank is the ambitious businessman of Deadrock, Nevada. He is unconcerned with the past of the town, focusing instead on the future. He is tenacious, persistent, passionate, and at times cut-throat, although his bark is far worse than his bite. He is prone to exaggeration and dramatics. When push comes to shove he folds to the

strong women around him (Polly and Irene). He repeatedly asked Polly to marry him, but she continually rejected his offers. It is doubtful that he truly loves Polly, but wants the best for himself. Since Polly is the only, she is the best...until Irene arrives.

Lank works in comic opposition to Everett and Bobby. Lank is aggressive and self-serving in his desires and business dealings. He does not account for the feelings of others. His attention to the future and disregard to the past conflicts with Everett's need to find memory and meaning in the past. The conflict between Everett and Lank, compounded by the bank's impending foreclosure adds the necessary urgency to the farcical plot. Bobby, often disguised as Bela, is working to save the theater and town, while Lank has a more selfish approach to revitalizing Deadrock. He wants to profit from the success financially, and Bobby wants to help Polly while involving all the citizens in the process. In the end, both Lank and Bobby manage to find success with the help of their romantic partners, Irene and Polly, respectively. Lank's domestication is a visual representation of Deadrock's transformation. He is changed from a gruff businessman to Irene's doting husband, a direct opposition of his initial character.

Everett Baker. Everett is the widowed father of Polly Baker. He loves Polly, but she is carrying the responsibility for their home and business that should fall to Everett. Although he is kind and jovial, he seems slightly disconnected. He is fixated on the past, what he's lost, and what his theater used to be. He continually wishes Polly "could have seen her [mother] on that stage, standing there behind the footlights."³⁶ He values the memories from the Gaiety Theater from years ago and is adamant about not selling the

³⁶ Ken Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 17.

theater to Lank, his binary opposition. Although he seems resigned and numb to life, upon meeting Lottie he becomes re-invigorated by the possibility of a new love.

Tess. Tess is the choreographer/dance captain of the Zangler Follies. She is more experienced and mature than the other chorus girls. She is smart, quick-witted, resourceful, and authoritative. She cares about helping her friends and seizes opportunities to make it happen, which results in the respect of Bobby and the other Zangler girls. Tess helps Bobby orchestrate and execute his plan in Deadrock, and Tess's idea that successfully reunites Bobby and Polly. Personally, Tess is romantically interested in Zangler, but refuses to enter a relationship with him until he is single. She has standards for herself and others. When Zangler explains his wife has left him, and backs up his affections with action by producing the show in Deadrock, she realizes he has changed and truly ready for a real relationship with her.

Lottie Child. Lottie is Bobby's business-minded mother. She is one of the elder characters present in the play and represents an older way of thinking. She is business minded, valuing the dollar above all else. In her mind, business and finance are the only things that matters. She is another alpha-female and doesn't appreciate other alpha-females such as Irene. She is hard to please and critical of most people and most things. She feels entitled to voice her opinion because of her wealth, class, and status.

Eugene and Patricia Fodor. These British siblings are explorers profiling the American West. They are used to luxury and expect it wherever they go, albeit in an unassuming and charming way. They are eternally optimistic, cheerful, and encourage others to follow their example. They serve in direct opposition to the Americans, from

both the East and West. They bring a different sensibility and texture to the fabric of Deadrock as a distinct “other.”

Tertiary Characters

New York City Ensemble, Zangler Follies, and Deadrock Cowboys. The New York City Ensemble, Zangler Girls, and Deadrock Cowboys are third level characters.³⁷ They help facilitate information about the world of the play, convey the dissimilarities between the conflicting worlds of New York City and Deadrock, and most importantly provide comedic relief. These characters do not have clear backstories or drive the action, but support the themes of the play and serves as the dancing chorus for production numbers.

Within the show, Zangler’s beautiful and savvy showgirls help establish the world of New York and bring the “city” to Nevada. They are the embodiment of the quintessential “leggy” chorus girls of Ziegfeld fame, which perpetuates the nostalgia of the classic musical comedy. The Deadrock Cowboys are not prepared for the beautiful showgirls to arrive in town. Polly Baker is the only female they have encountered for years. Their normal stasis is interrupted upon their arrival in town, and they are willing to do anything to spend more time with the women. The American East meets American West when the Follies and cowboys combine to make one company. When they begin rehearsals their differences are striking, but by the end of the show they are a unified ensemble.

³⁷ The New York Ensemble is an optional chorus listed in the libretto. They can be doubled from the cowboys and Zangler girl ensemble, or their own group. I chose to use the ensemble to provide more opportunities to students and enhance the vocals of the production. The New York ensemble serve as workers who help manage Zangler’s production or work for Lottie. They are constantly working and moving in the fast-paced world of the city, a direct contrast to the Cowboys of Deadrock.

The characters in *Crazy for You* are largely one-dimensional. They serve a function in the farcical plot, rather than offer depth or complexity to the production. Despite the lack of dimensionality, these characters contain an earnestness that should be respected no matter how shallow. An understanding and acceptance of the characterization in a show shapes the style of the production and the way in which a director approaches the piece with actors. I found it helpful to embrace the shallow characterizations within the libretto so I would not fight against it during the rehearsal period. A production can only function within the bounds of its structure. The success of the production relies on the director's ability to make the characters come to life not matter their deficiencies.

Theoretical Approach

In examining the dramatic structure and character development of *Crazy for You*, the blending of the classic musical comedy genre and its descendent, the book musical, re-enforces the consistent pattern of synthesis. The use of the source material *Girl Crazy*, interpolation of the Gershwin song catalogue, and evolution of the musical comedy subgenre in *Crazy for You* lends the work to be examined through the lens of adaptation theory to help inform directorial choices. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as “both a product and a process of creation and reception, this suggests to me the need for a theoretical perspective that is at once formal and ‘experiential.’”³⁸ Process, product, and experience (or audience reception) are the three areas of adaptation that highlight the theme of renewal present in the work.

³⁸ Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), xvi.

Adaptation as a Process

Adaptation as a process refers to the general process of growth and evolution subjects experience over time. In *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, Daniel Fischlin describes the innate quality of adaption within theatre. He argues “theatre is always a form of reworking, in a sense the first step toward adaptation.”³⁹ This reworking of the theatrical forms is seen throughout history. Overtime new genres and forms arise to meet the needs of artists and taste of audiences. This is clearly exemplified in the shift from classic musical comedy to the Golden Age book musical. Artists moved past the loosely constructed humorous book that served the music and transitioned into a form that celebrated a more cohesive and unified story from all the performance elements.

Understanding adaption as a process helps link each version of a story to its predecessor; essentially, there are no isolated texts. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders posits “texts feed off each other and create other texts, and other critical studies; literature creates other literature.”⁴⁰ This textual evolution is in some ways the basic premise of *Crazy for You*; the play has undergone several different incarnations. As previously mentioned, the Gershwin’s classic musical comedy premiered in 1930. Although largely reinvented through the process of adaption, *Girl Crazy* served as the seed of inspiration in the various incarnations. Each version of the story informs the one that follows.

³⁹ Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, ed., *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7.

⁴⁰ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 14.

Adaptation as a Product

Adaptation “is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new.” This “something new” is the product that emerges from the process. It can be evaluated on its own merit as well as its relation to other versions of the story. In “Textual Identity and Adaptive Revision: Editing Adaptation as a Fluid Text,” John Bryant expands on this concept stating, “adaptors of the originating version of a work are collaborators in the making of the work in its totality. Like translators, they transform a text for new or different audiences, and address new conditions and problems in a culture.” Each product is informed by the social and artistic climate of time, culture, and its predecessors.

Adaptation serves as a common inspiration for performance pieces. According to Flinn, “more than two-thirds of the musicals produced on Broadway throughout the twentieth century were adaptations, with an increasing number from the Golden Age.”⁴¹ Hutcheon argues “expensive collaborative art forms like operas, musicals, and films are going to look for safe bets with a ready audience—and that usually means adaptations.”⁴² This is exemplified in musical adaptations of novels (*Les Misérables*), films (*Legally Blonde* and *Shrek*), and musical groups (*Jersey Boys* and *Mama Mia*) hoping to draw from their source material’s popularity. According to Susan Bennett’s theory of the horizon of expectation, audiences enter the theater with an understanding of the source material from previous interpretations they have experienced. The production then has the ability to meet, exceed, change, or fail to meet the audiences’ expectations of the

⁴¹ Flinn, *The Great American Book Musical*, 105.

⁴² Hutcheon and O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 87.

performance. It is an understanding of this responsibility that aids in artistic choices that shape audiences' experiences.

Crazy for You pulls from the Gershwins' canon of songs as well as their production of *Girl Crazy*, but features a significantly altered libretto. It is common for adaptations to "attempt to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and relationships via the processes of proximation and updating."⁴³ That was the goal of the creative team in the construction of the musical. In an interview about the show, Susan Stroman stated, "We wanted to direct and choreograph in a more contemporary fashion...even though the story and music dictated the 1930's."⁴⁴ This combination of the old and new was noted in the reviews of the original production and was interwoven into the structure of the musical, resulting in hybridity between musical comedy and the book musical.

Crazy for You straddles the line between a revival and a new musical. This combination of the old and the new classifies the musical as a "revisal." In "New Horizons: the Musical at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century," Bud Coleman defines a revisal as "a variation on the director and/or choreographer as auteur is the revival which features a new (or significantly altered) libretto. In the case of these 'revisals,' the librettist is now the auteur."⁴⁵ Since the music is already established, librettists often craft the story they conceive without the input of the composers, who—in the case of the Gershwins—may be dead at the time development begins on the new show. This is a

⁴³ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 14.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Dunning, "Crazy for Dance, a Broadway Gypsy Creates Her Own."

⁴⁵ Bud Coleman, "New Horizons: the musical at the dawn of the twenty-first century," In *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 2nd ed., ed. by William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 293.

common occurrence with classic musical comedies. Kowalke states “no pre-Golden Age show—not even *Show Boat*—has been successfully revived on Broadway (and thereafter entered into the canon) without undergoing major revisions to bring it into closer conformity with the conventions of the post-*Oklahoma!* musical.”⁴⁶ This method of revisal allows librettist to update established texts and make them more palatable to a contemporary audience.

Since the Gershwins composed such a large catalog of beloved music, they are a common subject of musical revisals and are often successful. *My One and Only* (1983) took source material from *Funny Face*, with a new book by Peter Stone and Timothy S. Mayer. The musical was nominated for eleven Tony Awards and ran for 767 performances. *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (2012) followed the path of *Crazy for You*. It featured a revised libretto of *Oh, Kay!*, by Joe DiPiero. The musical was directed and choreographed by Kathleen Marshall with a cast led by Broadway veterans Kelli O’ Hara and Matthew Broderick. This production was nominated for ten Tony Awards and ran for 478 performances.

Adaptation and Audience Response

Hutcheon describes adaptation as an experiential event. Each element of the storytelling effects the audience and their personal interpretation and enjoyment of the performance. According to Fischlin, “theatrical adaptation is an intertextual apparatus, a system of relations and citations not only between verbal texts, but between singing and speaking bodies, lights, sounds, movements, and all other cultural elements work in

⁴⁶ Kowalke, “Theorizing the Golden Age Musical,” 134.

theatrical production.”⁴⁷ The product generates signs that carry meaning to the spectators, who process the signifiers as they watch the performance. In theatrical adaptation, these signs are tied to the original and preexisting interpretations of the text and the audience’s knowledge of them. Sanders states:

Adaptation and appropriation are dependent on the literary canon for the provision of a shared body of storylines, themes, characters, and ideas upon which their creative variations can be made. The spectator or reader must be able to participate in the play of similarity and difference perceived between the original source or inspiration to appreciate fully the reshaping or rewriting undertaken by the adaptive text.⁴⁸

An informed audience is vital to the effectiveness of a theatrical adaptation. Their understanding and acknowledgement of the adaptive work’s use of the source material shapes the audience’s theatrical experience.

This familiarity with the canon is vital to a deeper understanding of adaptive works. Enjoyment for audience members during theatrical adaptations arises from the “mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty.”⁴⁹ This is not about identifying places where fidelity to source material lapses, but in “not quite repeating, in revisiting of a theme with variations.”⁵⁰ The joy comes from seeing how the authors use and alter the source material in the creation of a new story. Audiences are invited to participate in the storytelling by noticing the similarities and deviations in the new interpretation. They are collaborators with the director, designers, and performers in the theatrical performance. Familiarity with the source material allows audiences to actively

⁴⁷ Fischlin and Fortier, ed., *Adaptations of Shakespeare*, 7.

⁴⁸ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 45.

⁴⁹ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 114.

⁵⁰ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 115.

engage with a production beyond the basic narrative. Audiences are experiencing something old become new in front of them.

Most audiences are not aware of *Girl Crazy*, but they are familiar with the music of George and Ira Gershwin. Although the outline of the plot is borrowed, it is the reinterpretation of the classic Gershwin musical canon that serves as the text for this adaptive product. Their music is preserved in the adaptation, and the process continues with each new interpretation of their music. Some scholars negatively view adaptation theory as truncating originality, but Hutcheon reminds artists and scholars “adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source...It may, on the contrary, keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would have never have had otherwise.”⁵¹ It is arguable if the Gershwin song catalog needs to be revived through different musical adaptations such as *Crazy for You* or *Nice Work If You Can Get It* to sustain popularity. Regardless, these musical revisals preserve the Gershwin standards and present them in a fresh way to a new generation. By presenting their music to new audience, the Gershwin catalog is reexamined and interpreted “ensuring a continued interest in the original or source text, albeit in revised circumstances of understanding.”⁵²

While Hutcheon does not believe adaptations to be “vampiric,” Ethan Mordden argues the overuse of popular songs in the Gershwin catalogue stunts their dramatic effectiveness. As previously mentioned, *My One and Only*, *Crazy for You*, and *Nice Work If You Can Get It* have all revised old Gershwin musicals *Funny Face*, *Girl Crazy*, and *Oh, Kay!* respectively. These productions freely alter the libretto but highlight the

⁵¹ Hutcheon and O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 176.

⁵² Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 97-98.

Gershwin's scores. "Nice Work If You Can Get It" is present in all three shows, and four other songs are presented in two of the three productions.⁵³ In *Anything Goes: A History of American Musical Theatre*, Mordden uses an illustration from *My One and Only* to explain the danger in the overuse of specific songs in the canon to dramatic action and believability.

So when Twiggy sang the Heroine's Wanting Song sitting in an odd little crescent-moon chair during a press interview... Twiggy's character was truly introducing herself to us. This is because that number, "Boy Wanted," is from Gershwin's little-known London show of 1924, *Primrose*. New Yorkers had never heard it before, and were thus drawn into to share the character's privacy. But if, instead, the character had sung "Someone to Watch Over Me," an old chestnut that for all its charm is dramatically all used up, she would have nothing to share with us, whether in *Crazy for You* (1992) or *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (2012), two jukebox shows that lamely sought to acquaint us with their heroines using this tired old piece.⁵⁴

It is easy to dismiss Mordden's claim as mere opinion, but it was echoed by critics who found it hard to emotional connect with Polly or believe her sincerity, mentioned in the critical response section of chapter one. This is a direct contrast to "What Causes That?," which was praised for its ingenuity and freshness. It is less popular as a stand-alone song, but worked better within the dramatic arc of the musical. This idea relates to Bennet's theory of the horizon of expectation. The less familiar patrons are with a song, the lower their expectation, allowing audiences to easily believe the song is emerging naturally from the story in standard book musical fashion, rather than a contrived plot to fit a specific song. When audiences encounter popular songs such as "Someone to Watch Over Me" their expectations are significantly higher. They compare the song to the

⁵³ "But Not For Me," "Someone to Watch Over Me," "S Wonderful," and "Blah, Blah, Blah" are the four songs that are present in two of the three musicals.

⁵⁴ Ethan Mordden, *Anything Goes: A History of American Musical Theatre*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 254-255.

multitude of other interpretations they have seen or heard in their lifetime, instead of viewing the piece within the context of the story they are watching unfold.

Revisal musicals must find the balance between “crowd pleasers” to satisfy audiences (musical comedy) and lesser known songs that may help dramatically and allow audiences to stay engaged in the action of the story (book musical). Theatrical adaptations deal with texts that are familiar to their audiences. Therefore, it becomes the job of the creative team to take into account Susan Bennett’s theory of the horizon of expectation, source material, and previous adaptations to shape the artistic decisions for a production.

Conclusion

Examining the dramatic structure, characterization, and theoretical approach to *Crazy for You* reinforces the theme of renewal. In this show, characters, Deadrock, and the Gaiety Theater are figuratively brought back to life. The same is true for the return of the nostalgic structure of the classic musical comedy and the Golden Age book musical in the time of the megamusical. This production celebrates musical theatre by returning to its roots, making the old new again. It elicits an “old-fashioned” aesthetic by combining the structure of classical and Golden Age musical comedy. Knowing most of the audience will enter the theater with clear expectations of musical theatre and the Gershwin canon, the Baylor production of *Crazy for You* will pay homage to the past through the artistic choices made in the design process. This collaboration with designers, musical directors, choreographers, actors, and musicians—from initial brainstorming to the final bow—is documented in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

The Design Process

Introduction

This chapter follows the artistic process between the director and designers for Baylor University's production of *Crazy for You*. From the early brainstorming sessions to the final decisions, this chapter documents the collaboration, rationale, and challenges of the design process for the production. The essential elements from each area will be discussed in relationship to the musical's theme, structure, and concept. The thematic thread of *Crazy for You* as a musical that adapts and invokes the conventions of classic musical theatre (previously discussed in chapter two) served as a foundational ideology between the director and designers, shaping the concept and overall artistic decisions for the production.

Conceptual Approach

After conducting research regarding the history of the production and theoretical approaches to the material, I developed a concept statement for the production. There are countless possibilities to direct and design a production, but a director's concept unifies artistic elements into one cohesive vision. A directorial concept can be an image, quote, painting, or metaphor that inspires a production team's choices. I synthesized the information detailed in the previous two chapters into a concept that inspired the entire production team.

For my concept statement, I chose a quote from Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."¹ This quote appealed to me for a variety of reasons. Over the course of my research, I was struck by the prolific use of phrases such as "classic musical comedy," "return," and "old-fashioned." This idea of nostalgia is echoed in the adaptation of the Gershwin's source material, the revised libretto, and overall homage to the musical comedy and book musical. *Crazy for You* celebrates the musical comedy sub-genre and form while unapologetically embracing its musical theatre conventions, structures, and stereotypes.

With the design team, the concept statement proved fruitful. The Faulkner quote inspired ideas of the Golden Age of musical theatre and encouraged the incorporation of elements that evoked the idea of the quintessential "old-fashioned" musical. We did not, however, want to present a museum piece, and I felt Faulkner's quote supported this aim.² The quote speaks to how the past is always a part of the present. The original production of *Crazy for You* embraced this ideal and I wanted our production to do the same. When *Crazy for You* premiered, the show was praised for mixing the old with the new; the design team wanted to give our production the same artistic freedom. Musicals of today continue to build on what is "iconic" about musical theatre. It was the job of the designers and I to discover how to enact the concept statement visually on stage.

The designers and I discussed our personal interpretations of the Faulkner quote in the first production meetings. The first step was to identify the elements we viewed as iconic to Golden Age era. We began by brainstorming iconic shows of the Golden Age

¹ William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), 92.

² Throughout chapter 3 and 4 I refer several times to "we." Although I served as the director, I used the design team as a brain trust. Collaboration was vital to the process, so "we" is more common than I for most of the design decisions.

era –shows such as *South Pacific*, *West Side Story*, and *A Chorus Line*. Through the discussion of these and other significant works in the canon, the team was able to brainstorm elements we thought represented the “old-fashioned” musical. Some elements brought up were already present in *Crazy for You* such as the classic score, the tap dancing, and the comedic plot. Other ideas discussed were marquee lights, foot lights, bright colors, romance, splashy spectacle, Florenz Ziegfeld, and showgirls/chorus boys. Each designer had their own unique perspective of “old-fashioned” musical theatre. The issue became how to narrow down the list of qualities to be incorporated in our production. We needed a focused list of tenets as a foundation for the design process. The design team and I were not interested in verisimilitude and historic aesthetics of the Golden Age period, so we decided to focus on a few generalized principles that encompassed many of the ideas the team originally brainstormed and were echoed in the course of my research. Our goal was to select components of the Golden Age aesthetic that evoked the feeling of that in our production. We decided on the following four elements: (1) a presentational performance style, (2) binary opposition, (3) a strong use of color, and (4) the use spectacle and showmanship.

The choice to present *Crazy for You* as a presentational style served as the foundation for every part of the production. Each design, directorial, and acting choice had to fit within the agreed upon style. The characters and situations in *Crazy for You* are heightened to create a comedic world in which people can feasibly burst into song and dance; therefore an attempt to direct this production as realistic would be a mistake. I chose to direct the show in a presentational style with stylized acting (discussed further in chapter four) to allow the singing, dancing, and fast-paced physical comedy required by

the material to fit the world of the production and I wanted the design to reflect that directorial approach. One way this was exemplified in the design of the production was the decision to use the cast to shift scenery in full view of the audience instead of attempting to hide the scenic transitions as “theatre magic.” Realism was not the aim for any part of the production.

We chose to implore Kim Kowalke’s theory on the importance of binary opposition in Golden Age musicals (mentioned previously in chapter two) as our second design focus. The designers and I felt highlighting elements of opposition would be especially fruitful in this production. Ludwig uses these oppositions to help generate the comedic situations in this musical. Much of *Crazy for You* revolves around the stark differences between people and locations so the designers had several areas of inspiration. The audience watches as Bobby struggles to adjust to the people, climate, and culture of Deadrock which is vastly different than New York City. The contrast between the apathetic cowboys of Deadrock and the vivacious Zangler showgirls is another example of the comedic opposition built into the construction of the musical. I was interested in how elements of design such as scenery, costume, and lighting could highlight distinct areas of opposition. I wanted to see how the scenic design could instantly show the audience Bobby is out of his element in Deadrock and how the costume designer could instantly differentiate Polly from Irene. The exploration and illustration of these opposites became pivotal to the design process.

During our brainstorming sessions, many of the designers mentioned the common conceit of bright saturated colors as an iconic element in musical theatre. As we entered the design process the team believed the use of color could work in conjunction with the

idea of binary opposition. Color is a specific tool that allowed us to highlight the stark contrasts between New York City and Deadrock and their citizens, while supporting the ideals of binary opposition. The design team decided on two distinct color palettes for New York City and Deadrock. We decided on a cool, dark color palette of dark blue, grey, and black for New York City and its citizens (with the exception of the Zangler girls). Deadrock contrasted New York City with a bland palette of khaki and dull hues of burnt orange, amber, red, and yellow for the town. These tones illustrated the idea of Deadrock as a boring town. The Zangler girls were given their own color palette of more stereotypically feminine pastel colors such as pink, light blue, purple, and green. Their palette fit their show girl aesthetic by drawing attention to themselves, especially against the dull backdrop of Deadrock. The lighting designer was also able to use color as a communicative tool to help the audience know when Bobby was fantasizing as well as diegetic or non-diegetic songs.

The final element the design team and I wanted to incorporate was spectacle. Each designer on the team viewed spectacle as a staple of musical theatre. We wanted moments in our production that surprised and delighted the audiences. I viewed the choreography as the main method of spectacle. The production team all agreed the sight and sound of over twenty people tap dancing in unison was the quintessential idea of classic musical theatre. Besides the choreography, we wanted to find ways for spectacle to enhance moments in the show. We decided early in the process to replicate the original production's use of the limo with an elevator in it for "Can't Be Bothered Now," as one instance of spectacle. We then brainstormed ways in which the scenic, costume, and lighting design could add moments of spectacle to the production. Each designer

provided a different perspective on how to incorporate these four elements into all design areas in a style reminiscent of the Golden Age of musical theatre. The conversations, discussions, and differences of opinions led to the artistic choices explained in the following sections of this chapter.

Scenic Design

The scenic design for this production proved the most challenging element of the process. I developed two goals for the scenic design before meeting with the designer to discuss the production. My main goal was to have a scenic design that eliminated the need for blackouts in transitions between scenes. I envisioned a design that allowed for seamless shifts from one scene or song to next. Contemporary audiences no longer desire for the disjointed structure of classic musical comedies. Book musicals attempt to seamlessly combine each element of a musical production and I wanted the scenic design to echo the integration of each design area by allowing transitions to flow fluidly.

In addition to my directorial wishes, there were also the needs of the show that had to be considered. The action of the show takes place in New York City and Deadrock, Nevada. In New York City, there are two scenic locations, the interior and exterior of the Zangler Theater. The interior does not have specific demands in the script, while the exterior requires the façade of the Zangler Theater. Deadrock features several scenic locations: the interior and exterior of the Gaiety Theater, the interior and exterior of Lank's saloon, and the exterior of the general store, the street of Deadrock, and the desert of Nevada.

Each of these spaces had specific requirements as well. The interior of the Gaiety Theater featured production numbers with the majority of the company; the design

needed to represent a theater while still maximizing space for choreography. The interior of Lank's saloon needed levels and adequate space for the ensemble to perform fight choreography, as well as an upper level of hotel rooms with functioning doors to provide the farcical comedic element in act two. The street of Deadrock required the exterior façades of the three buildings in Deadrock. The street was used for several scenes that involve the majority of the company, so the exteriors needed practical levels for cast members to stand for visual interest and visibility as well as enough space for dance and movement.

Working with my scenic designer on this production was a pleasure. He was able to incorporate my concept statement, my directorial goals for the scenic design, the scenic needs of the show, and his own artistry into one cohesive design. We began the process by meeting one on one to brainstorm ideas for the scenic design that could be brought back to the entire team at production meetings. He brought in sketches and visual research of 1930s New York, the rural West, and various abandoned and restored Victorian theaters. We discussed what parts of the images we were drawn to and how we thought they could work in our production. Early in the process, the scenic designer developed a conceptual differentiation between the scenic locations of New York City and Deadrock, Nevada. He described New York as cold and industrial and Deadrock as warm and rustic. To achieve this rustic quality, the designer decided on wood as the major building material the citizens used in the construction of Deadrock, but over the years the town began to fall apart. Our Deadrock would be shabby, isolated, and not as technologically advanced as industrial New York City. The designer's choices created a clear dichotomy between New York City and Deadrock, which served as a foundation for

the scenic design. The difference in materials, color, and style helped distinguish one scenic location from the other.

The scenic designer's research images sparked ideas I had not originally considered. One example of this was the idea for a false proscenium for *Crazy for You*. The idea was born from the designer's ideas for the interior of the Gaiety Theater. Polly describes Deadrock as a "big town" fifty years prior to Bobby's arrival.³ During that time, the Gaiety Theater housed "big shows."⁴ These lines served as clues that led the scenic designer to research theaters from the 1880s. He shared images that illustrated immaculate as well as decrepit Victorian theaters. These pictures gave the designer a vision for the first time the theater is revealed to the audience and how its restoration should look in act two, scene three. The designer's research images of the proscenium fit the aesthetic of the "old-fashioned" musical, and I requested that a false proscenium be added to the flat black proscenium arch of the Jones Theater to help visually represent the nostalgia of the concept statement. Instead of audiences seeing the Jones Theater's black proscenium, they would see a proscenium reminiscent of an old Victorian theater.

Throughout the design process, the scenic designer and I continued to meet one on one to think through details of the design, the functionality of set pieces, and scenic transitions. We spent hours attempting to discover the proper configuration and placement of set pieces in relation to the stage curtains. I wanted to make sure scenic transitions would not be impeded by a poor ground plan. The designer and I used the set model he created to review the ground plan for each scenic location, seen in Figure A.1. We would set up each ground plan and simulate how we expected to perform the next

³ Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 23.

⁴ Ludwig, Gershwin, and Gershwin, *Crazy for You*, 23.

transition. This process allowed us to diagnosis potential problems and adjust the ground plan or scenic design accordingly. Despite our best efforts, we still struggled with scenic transitions later in the production process.

After discussing several solutions, we brought back the information, changes, and new ideas to the design team for their input to ensure a collaborative process by all the members of the team. As the scenic designer and I developed the details of the production, many of the ideas extended beyond the normal scope of scenic design. We wanted to incorporate a light-up marquee sign, a L.E.D. star curtain, and other elements that required the involvement of the lighting designer. The lighting designer was in total support of the design elements and worked with the scenic designer to bring the ideas to fruition. Ideas were tossed around the team, shot down, altered, and enhanced for the betterment of the production. We kept discussing the details until everyone felt comfortable with the design.

The Design

The final design for the production featured the seven different scenic locations. The first location in the musical is the backstage area of the Zangler Theater in New York City, seen in Figure A.2. This is the only time the location is used in the musical, so neither the designer nor I wanted to spend too much labor or budgetary money on this scenic location. The designer decided the curtains the department already owned created the look of an offstage wing area for the scene to occur. Upstage of the opening in the curtain was the “onstage” area for the *Zangler Follies* performance. The curtains created the look of backstage and provided masking of the set piece for the next scene, the

exterior façade of the Zangler Theater. This scenic choice allowed for a quick transition between these two scenes.

The New York exterior achieved several conceptual goals. The exterior of the Zangler Theater, seen in figure A.3, featured a skyline made of steel behind the wagon of the Zangler theater box office and stage door, but still provided ample room for the choreography of “Can’t Be Bothered” and “Nice Work If You Can Get It.” This structure of the skyline was inspired by Oliver Smith’s original scenic design for *West Side Story*. This was one way the scenic designer was able to incorporate a specific element of a Golden Age musical into this production, bridging the gap between the past and the present. The Zangler Theater’s box office and stage door were inspired by several research images of 1930s New York theaters. We decided on an art-deco aesthetic with marquee light bulbs around the façade of the theater’s name.

The street of Deadrock, Nevada, seen in figure A.4, featured the general store, Gaiety Theater/post office, and Lank’s saloon. The scenic designer and I suggested we use the cyclorama as the backdrop for the scenes in Deadrock to avoid the need to paint or rent a backdrop. This would provide the freedom to alter the times of day in the scenes from sunrise, to high noon, to dusk, and eventually sunset. The lighting designer was amiable to this idea and incorporated it into her design.

Of the three buildings on the street of Deadrock, both the Gaiety Theater and Lank’s saloon have scenes that take place inside of them. In an effort to save money and space offstage, the scenic designer planned for each unit to serve a double function. Lank’s saloon had an exterior façade and rotated around to show the interior of the saloon. Since no scenes take place in the general store, the opposite side of that unit

served as the exterior of the Zangler Theater. The production team agreed this plan would cut down the needs of the build in half. We spent several meetings discussing and playing with the arrangement of the buildings in the scenic model based on the needs within the script, the size of the units, and wing space before deciding on the final positioning of the units. The Jones Theater stage right wing is 29ft. wide and 40ft. long without taking into account the masking of the curtains, while stage left is 13 ft. wide and 40ft. long. The configuration of the buildings in Deadrock were largely based on what was possible and practical in the space.⁵

Lank's saloon and hotel was designed as a large two-story unit that was 23ft. long and 12 ft. wide. The unit featured a porch and balcony on the stage left side of the unit that created the exterior look of the saloon. When in its saloon exterior position for the street of Deadrock, seen in figure A.5, only the saloon entrance, porch, and balcony were visible to the audience as the rest of the unit was offstage. As the unit rolled fully onstage, it revealed the interior view of the saloon, seen in figure A.6. During the design process the major concern with this unit was its size. The stage manager, lighting designer, and I were fearful the unit was too big, but the requirements of the libretto warranted a large unit. There are scenes in the saloon that feature 25 characters at one time, so the unit needed to be able to accommodate the actors and provide ample space for movement.

The interior of the Gaiety Theater included a false proscenium, stage paraphernalia (ladders, trunks, clothing rack, etc.), and a tattered curtain draped over a

⁵ The Jones Theater is the 350-seat proscenium performance space in the Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Building, which houses the theatre department on the Baylor University campus. It is the traditional performance venue for the theatre department's musical since it is the only space in the building that includes an orchestra pit.

low hanging baton, seen in figure A.7. As the company restored the theater, an Austrian curtain was flown in as the “repaired” curtain, seen in figure A.8. These items seemed to encapsulate the common trope of the backstage musicals where characters are putting on a show, as seen in such musicals as *42nd Street* and *Annie Get Your Gun*. This connection between the backstage aesthetic and Golden Age musicals fit the concept and needs of the design. During the production, the permanent downstage proscenium (attached to the Jones proscenium) visually connected to the false proscenium flown in to depict the Gaiety Theater, melding the Jones Theater and the Gaiety Theater for those scenes.

The location of “Finale” is slightly ambiguous in the libretto. I wanted the scene to feel magical and romantic but still part of Bobby and Polly’s reality. I wanted the audience to know this was no longer a fantasy in Bobby’s mind, but the happy ending Bobby and Polly desired. The scenic designer decided the performance happens on the stage of the Gaiety Theater, but on a new set piece of the successful show starring Bobby and Polly. We chose to use a grand white staircase inspired by productions of Ziegfeld Follies, seen in figure A.9.

There were two scenic locations that did not make it into the final design for this production, the lobby and the dressing rooms of the Gaiety Theater. The design team could not come to a consensus about the interior lobby of the Gaiety Theater (act one, scene eight). The preliminary sketches by the scenic designer featured a staircase up to the balcony seating of the theater, which was necessary for a moment of dialogue in act one, scene three.⁶ The stair unit created a need for a long structural wall that hindered the ability of the lighting designer to light the scene and created an unpleasing, narrow, boxy

⁶ The unit is in its exterior position during this scene. Polly is inside the unit and yells from the window at Lank who is on the street below the second story window. The staircase would be functional for that scene, but was not necessary for the action in act one, scene eight.

look for the set piece, seen in figure A.10. The lower part of the unit featured the desk of the post office and an entrance from the street. Each part of the unit's space was used in the design, but the design did not provide a clear exit to the theater or allow for a quick transition from the lobby of the theater to the rehearsal space. This design also created a large footprint that interfered with the cyclorama upstage. Many suggestions were made about cutting the staircase wall at an angle or adjusting other pieces on the unit to provide more lighting opportunities and modify the boxy nature of the wagon. After a few weeks of different solutions, I was still not pleased with the look of the set piece and the obstacles it created in the transition into the next scene. The location was only used in act one, scene eight, so I decided to play the scene on the stage of the Gaiety Theater, a location that is used several times over the course of the show. This decision meant the lobby unit of the Gaiety Theater was no longer needed. The lighting designer, scenic designer, and technical director all supported this alteration to the design.

Another scenic location was cut as a result of a decision made between the music directors and myself in the early stages of pre-production. We decided to cut "Tonight's the Night" and use the song as underscoring for the dialogue. This alteration allowed the scene to be played on the stage of the Gaiety Theater as the cast members prepared for their opening night performance. Therefore, the dressing rooms of the Gaiety Theater were no longer needed in the scenic design for the production.

Scenic Challenges

While I was pleased with the scenic design for the production there were two major challenges to overcome: size and budget. The biggest issue with the scenic design was the scale. The units took up a lot of the stage, shrinking the available space for the

choreography. The scale of the set pieces also created issues with masking. The units were so tall and wide they could not move into the wings without flying out several curtains during scenic transitions. These curtains were serving as masking to the backstage area. When they were flown out audiences were able to clearly see backstage into the wings. Backstage were four large set pieces, quick change stations, props, 38 cast members, and a multitude of crew members. The ability to see so much backstage was distracting as performers sang and danced on stage. Ultimately, the scenic designer, stage manager, and I had to tweak the ground plan and offstage storage position of scenic pieces, so every unit was placed in the most efficient location to create smooth scenic transitions with the least distraction.

As previously mentioned, wing space in the Jones Theater is a crucial issue, especially stage left. The largest unit, Lank's saloon, proved to be the most difficult unit to store offstage. The scenic designer provided several different sketches of options for storing the saloon offstage as well as its optimum onstage position. The production team had concerns, however, about safely moving a wagon of that size simultaneously with other units on stage in transitions without interrupting the flow of the show. The scenic designer and I met to discuss how set pieces transitioned from scene to scene, where pieces were stored off-stage, and how we would mask the wings during the show in hopes of solving problems pre-emptively.

Crazy for You received a healthy production budget, but early in the design process the team realized every idea could not fit within its constraints. The scenic designer and I considered renting theatrical backdrops for many of the scenic locations and supplementing the design with necessary wagons. We researched different rental

options for backdrops, but the options were expensive and did not match our conceptual vision. We hoped making the scenic units serve dual purposes would help the budget by cutting down the number of wagons needed for the production. The choice cut down on materials, but the increased functionality of each wagon required more support and casters to roll smoothly and safely for the entire run of the production. Lank's saloon required heavy duty casters to support the weight of the unit and cost a little over \$800 for those items alone. The expense of each unit made the elimination of the lobby and the dressing rooms of the Gaiety Theater more beneficial. These challenges presented minor setbacks for the overall production. The spatial and budgetary limitations provided clear restrictions and prompted directorial creativity. It was a task I repeatedly faced during this design process.

Costume Design

The costume designer for this production was tasked with costuming the 38 people in a multitude of looks. This production of *Crazy for You* proved to be a larger than expected in many ways, but especially in the area of costume design, which featured 131 costumes or looks made up of over 600 pieces to serve the requirements of the musical. For example, Bobby needs 4 suits, one of which must be a duplicate of Zangler's and another that matches Polly's dress for the "Finale." Polly needs a day look in addition to her costume for the "Finale." The looks for the principal characters are manageable; the Zangler girl ensemble, however, created a challenge for the costume shop. The scripts call for Zangler girls to have 8 different costumes. Many of those looks are detailed pieces with rhinestones, crystals, or glitter to reflect their showgirl persona. Our production featured 11 Zangler girls; therefore we needed 88 costumes for them

alone. During the design process, I worked with the costume designer to make choices that expressed the concept, served the production, and worked within the resources of Baylor University's costume shop.

Beyond the demands of the show, I had my own personal goals for the costume design. Like all the design areas, I wanted to incorporate as many of the Golden Age musical tenets associated with the concept statement as possible into the design. Ideally the design would instantly illustrate the binary between characters from New York City and characters from Deadrock through the color, silhouette, and style of the costumes. The color palettes the design team agreed on for each region were strongly reflected in the design.

I also wanted the costume design to embrace the romance between Bobby and Polly. The two fall in love dancing in the desert ("Shall We Dance") and I wanted Polly's skirt to flow and twirl as Bobby spun, lifted, and danced with Polly. I also envisioned a few unique costumes for Polly that are not called for in the libretto. I decided to place Polly in Bobby's second dream sequence, "Nice Work If You Can Get It." In the same way the Zangler girls have costumes as figments of Bobby's fantasies I wanted a similar dress for Polly that blurred the lines between fantasy and reality. I also requested a transformative dress for Polly at the end of the show. When Polly finally reunites with Bobby, I wanted her travel dress to transform in front of the audience into a white finale dress as the couple began their final dance.

The designer was receptive to my ideas and excited to incorporate the concept into the costume design for the production. The costume designer and I looked at research images of people in 1930's New York and the western part of the United States,

seen in figure A.11. We discussed the different shapes and silhouettes that we liked for different characters, our personal aesthetics, and what we wanted the overall look to be for the show. The costume designer and I decided to take the look and style of the period clothes and make “musical” versions, which we defined as a more refined and color saturated version of the period appropriate looks. The desire was not to have authentic cowboys, but depict a “cowboy” that could break into song and dance at any moment. This method was applied to all the costumes in the show in varying degrees.

In regard to my special request of a transformative dress, the costume designer liked this idea and the challenge of creating it. She added to the idea with an idea for a “growing dress” (à la *The Producers*) for Polly as she and Bobby dance in the desert during “Shall We Dance.” This would serve as a foreshadowing of the transforming dress in the “Finale” and highlight the idea of the transformative power of their love. She also presented an idea about altering Bobby’s vest during his dream sequence in “I Can’t Be Bothered Now.” Bobby would wear an identical vest to his suit for the song, but this vest would be embellished with subtle hints of shimmering sequins on the pinstripes to emphasize the difference between reality and Bobby’s theatrical dreams. It was thrilling to not only work with a costume designer that embraced my concept and vision, but enhanced my ideas with her own artistry.

The costume design process moved at a faster pace than the other design areas because the designer was working at a Shakespeare festival out of state for the summer. Consequently, the costume designer and I worked ahead of the theatre department’s normal production schedule to ensure the design was far enough along it would not be hindered by her absence. The costume designer brought in rough costume sketches and

renderings early in the production process to ensure the collaboration ran smoothly. Since the designer was ahead of the production schedule, she was able to share fabric swatches with the design team so the scenic and lighting designers knew the exact colors the actors would be wearing on stage. The designer and I continued to have conversations over the summer and email correspondence as she refined and finalized her designs. She was open to adjusting the designs and offering different options from which I could choose. The designer's communication and flexibility helped cut down on the need for excessive alterations to her designs. The process ran smoothly and ahead of schedule.

The Design

The costume designer used her work to delineate the similarities and differences of the characters visually. Her design highlighted the relationships and connections between characters as it maintained a musical theatre quality to the show. The style of the look and what it communicated to the audience was more important than the authenticity of a costume.

The characters from New York City (Bobby, Lottie, Bela, Irene, and the New York Ensemble) wore costumes in the dark color palette of navy, gray, and black to fit within the cold color scheme used in the New York City scenic locations and lighting choices (discussed later in this chapter). The costume designer and I wanted these characters to look more polished and put together than the citizens of Deadrock, so they wore fitted and layered looks. The costumes of these characters also reflected the hierarchy of wealth and status in New York. Bela and Lottie were given formal black business attire and accessories (capes, fur, hats, gloves, etc.), Irene wore a silky jade dress

and fur stole, Bobby a grey pinstripe suit with a hint of pink, and the New York ensemble, the bottom of the societal structure, wore simple work attire or uniform.

The Ziegfeld Follies naturally served as inspiration for the Zangler girls. Their uniformity and femininity was important to the costume, hair, and make-up design for this show. The Zangler girls did not fit in the cool color palette shared by the other New York characters. These women are performers and are known for drawing attention to themselves. The costume designer and I decided it was important to highlight their showgirl sensibility by giving them bright and colorful costumes.

The Zangler girls have three different looks. In the beginning of the show, the Zangler girls are backstage in their *Zangler Follie's* costumes as they prepare for their final entrance, seen in figure A.13. They are then seen through Bobby's eyes in "I Can't Be Bothered Now." The designer decided to go with iconic pink chorus girl costume with ruffles and sequence commonly used in productions of *Crazy for You*. This choice allowed the designer to rent or purchase this look, so the costume department could spend more time building other unique pieces that could not be easily obtained. During the "Finale" look the Zangler girls wear all white leotards that are embellished with rhinestone skirts, feather head pieces, and chiffon capes. The designer wanted this look to be reminiscent of the glamorous finales in Ziegfeld productions.

For "Girls Enter Nevada" and "Stiff Upper Lip" the Zangler girls wore colorful travel dresses, seen in figure A.14. The costume designer and I wanted to accentuate the femininity of the Zangler girls in contrast to the masculinity of the cowboys in Deadrock. We decide the best way to do this was by using a combination of bright colors and floral-patterned fabric. The costume designer selected five vibrant colored fabrics (orange,

yellow, turquoise, purple, and pink) and another five fabrics in the same colors but in a floral print. With the exception of Tess who wore the turquoise dress, each Zangler girl had a dress partner who wore the inverse of her dress. One girl wore a pink dress with a floral cape and her partner wore the pink floral dress with a solid pink cape. These dresses also came with matching hats and belts. The costume designer and choreographer worked together so the stage picture in “Girls Enter Nevada” clearly displayed the mirroring of the costumes, seen in appendix B.

The costume designer took inspiration from photographs she found of 1930s chorus girls to develop the look the Zangler girls’ rehearsal costumes for “Slap that Bass,” seen in figure A.15. Each girl was given a blouse and period appropriate high waisted shorts, with the exception of Tess who wore wide leg trousers. This allowed the performers mobility for the demanding choreography of the song.

The costumes for “I Got Rhythm” were designed to pay homage to the musical comedy. The costume designer and I decided to put both the Zangler girls and cowboys in red tuxedo tail coats and tuxedo shirts, seen in figure A.16. The Zangler girls wore black shorts with mini red top hats while the cowboys wore black tuxedo pants. The costume designer and I felt the tail coat and tap shoe combination evoked the iconic presentational style of musical theatre and the vibrant red color met the ideal for a strong use of color. The visual uniformity of the ensemble helped emphasize the new-found sense of community that resulted from the rehearsals for the big show.

Polly Baker, the only woman in Deadrock, created an interesting paradox for the costume designer and myself. I wanted to highlight her status as “one of the boys,” but also display her femininity since her romance with Bobby is pivotal to the story. I asked

the designer to give Polly a more masculine look initially. The designer thought this masculinity could best be displayed with Polly's first costume when she is delivering the mail around town, seen in figure A.17. The costume designer envisioned Polly altering Everett's old uniform for herself. This allowed the audience to see her in a similar light to the men in town before she cleans up and puts on her day dress.

Polly spends most of the show, however, in her day dress, seen in figure A.18. This dress was a simple light-green checkered design to contrast the bright, feminine look of the Zangler girls. This dress had a tulip skirt so as she and Bobby danced in "Shall We Dance" the dress would catch the air in spins and flare out to add beauty and movement to the romantic choreography. The designer also decided to purchase Polly matching shoes for this look. Since Polly wears the same dress in the tap production numbers "I Got Rhythm" and "Stiff Upper Lip," the designer bought a second pair of the green shoes and made the actress a pair of tap shoes. Her color coordinated shoes helped illustrate Polly's thoughtfulness and subtle femininity. Although other men, with the exception of Lank, do not view Polly as feminine enough to be a romantic possibility, the costume designer and I believed Polly still makes simple choices to display her femininity.

For "Nice Work If You Can Get It," the costume designer took the concept of the Zangler girls' pink costumes from "Can't Be Bothered Now" and designed a pink dress in Polly's aesthetic, seen in figure A.19. The dress maintained the femininity of the Zangler girls' costumes but remained true Polly's character. I believed when Bobby met Polly, he met the woman of his dreams and no longer needed to project his fantasies on the Zangler girls. This costume illustrated Bobby's dream merging with reality. He no longer needed to dream of the Zangler girls; he had Polly.

The cowboys of Deadrock worked in opposition to the Zangler girls in almost every way. They had few costumes and their look was more mundane and less elaborate than the showgirls. Their costumes included cowboy hats, boots, blue jeans, a western shirt, and other accessories such as chaps, handkerchiefs, and vests dispersed among the men. The cowboy trio was given one additional accessory of red berets when they performed the French reprise of “Bidin’ My Time,” seen in figure A.20. After the success of the show in Deadrock, the cowboys were given more embellished western shirts to reflect their newfound notoriety.

While most of the ideas the costume designer and I discussed were executed in the design for the production, there were a few items that could not be implemented in the show. The top hats for the cowboys during “I Got Rhythm” were cut from the design for budgetary concerns. Additionally, Polly’s growing dress for “Shall We Dance” did not make the final design of the production, despite several attempts to bring the idea to fruition.

Costume Challenges

I was pleased with the overall aesthetic of the costumes and how they aided in the storytelling of the musical. During the process, however, there were challenges that impacted the costume design for the production. The designer and I were flexible and willing to work together to resolve issues to the best of our ability. We problem solved and compromised to overcome obstacles related to choreography, budget limitations, and technological difficulties while attempting to bring the costume design to fruition.

After costume fittings began, a few actresses began to express concerns about being unable to do some of their choreography (leaps, kicks, etc.) in their restrictive

dresses. This was particularly true for the actress playing Irene. Early in the design process I asked for a detachable tie to be added to the side of her dress to tie up Lank as part of the choreography during “Naughty Baby.” This was added to the design and I thought there would be no further issues. After the actress playing Irene had her fitting, she informed the choreographer, costume designer, and myself that she did not feel like she would be able to do a majority of the choreography for “Naughty Baby.” The dress, however, was almost complete and could not be altered to accommodate the choreography. It was at this moment that I realized I failed to meet with choreographer and costume designer together to ensure we were all on the same page. The choreographer and costume designer did not talk about their areas until designs were already being built and the choreography was already taught. My failure to make sure the choreographer and costume designer were in communication forced more work on both the costume designer and the choreographer. The choreographer was gracious and gave the actress alternative choreography for moments that would not work in her costume, but the costume designer was able to pull another look for the actress. This additional costume was composed of a blouse and a loose-fitting skirt that would work with the physical choreography. The choreographer and costume designer problem solved other minor issues that existed between choreography and costumes so each performer was able to adequately perform the choreography.

The budget was a major concern for the costume designer. This production called for several pieces that required hours of labor to create one costume. The size of the cast made building the show from scratch on our timetable and budge impossible. This was most noticeable with the Zangler girls, who required the most costumes. The original

plan was to put all 11 of the Zangler girls into Bobby's dream sequences ("I Can't Be Bothered Now" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It"). After looking at the scope of the show, the costume shop staff did not feel like they could build all of these costumes and expressed a desire to rent those two looks for the Zangler girls.

As costume shop staff began to gather rental quotes, they discovered the rental price was a significant portion of the overall costume budget for the production, and many companies did not have a set of eleven pink chorus girl costumes available for rental. The costume designer and I spoke about alternative options to resolve the problem. I decided the best way to proceed was to divide the Zangler girls into two groups: one group of five girls we called the Silver Zangler girls and a group of six we called the Pink Zangler girls.⁷ The "Silver Zangler girls" wore costumes built by the Baylor costume shop in the act one, scene one and the "Finale," seen in figure A.21. The "Pink Zangler girls" wore pink costumes in the style of the original Broadway production, which the costume shop purchased and altered, seen in figure A.22. The decision to divide the Zangler girls into two groups helped save hours of labor by only having to make ten Zangler girls costumes for the opening and finale scenes instead of twenty-two. The budget benefitted from only purchasing six of the pink costumes instead of eleven.

In the case of Polly's growing and transforming dress, technology worked against the design. The costume designer and costume shop staff were crafting costumes in ways they had never done before. The construction and mechanics of the growing dress were difficult to obtain, but eventually electromagnets were discovered to be the answer. Upon

⁷ It is important to note this was not a unilateral decision. In an effort to maintain a collaborative atmosphere, I presented the idea to the choreographer. She supported the idea and gave her input as to how to divide the girls into the groups based on their unique skillsets.

further research, the costume designer discovered electromagnetics would not work for our production because they are known to overheat and potentially cause interference with the microphones. She could not find another method to create the growing dress and that idea was cut from the design for this production.

Although modified from my original request, the transformation dress made it into the production, seen in figure A.23. I initially wanted the travel dress and finale dress to be one piece, so as Polly danced, her traveling dress would tuck underneath the finale dress (a la *Cinderella* Broadway 2014). The costume department tried a variety of methods, but eventually decided they needed to make the dresses separate pieces. The travel dress was constructed in strategic pieces with snaps allowing two cast members to grab the dress as Polly spun, causing the snaps to tear away revealing the finale dress underneath. I asked for this to be replicated with Bobby's finale costume as well. The costume designer did not feel as if she could do an entire tear away suit, and so we agreed to have him enter in the pants he needed to wear in the "Finale" and focus on making the upper body portion of the costume tear away. Bobby's traveling suit coat and shirt were constructed similarly to Polly's traveling dress.

I was fortunate to have an extremely organized, proactive, and detail oriented costume designer for this production. She understood the needs, style, and concept of this production and worked to express those ideas in her costume design. Although there were a few challenges and miscommunications, the costume designer's willingness to collaborate, adapt, problem solve proved invaluable in mounting a production of this magnitude.

Hair and Make-Up

Two undergraduate students served as the hair and make-up designers for this production. The use of undergraduate designers is a common occurrence within the Baylor University Theatre department for students that excel in technical design areas. It allows them the opportunity to gain valuable experience through practical application. They worked closely with the costume designer who oversaw their work and made sure it was in line with the other designs already in progress.

The hair and make-up designers gathered research images from the 1930's for a clear understanding of period appropriate hair and make-up looks. They presented these images during a production meeting and discussed the nuances and differences. I mentioned my thoughts on what images best represented the characters in the story, and the two designers created a specific hair and make-up plan for each character. These plans were presented to the cast members during their hair and make-up fittings, in which each performer was given clear instructions on how to do their hair and make-up for the show. The make-up process was not an issue for this production.

The most impactful decision for hair and make-up was the choice to wig every female in the cast. In addition to the women in the production, the actor playing Bobby wore a wig and fake facial hair to quickly switch between his Bobby and Bela personas. The actor cast as Bela used his natural hair and facial hair, but his hair was styled to match the wig the actor playing Bobby wore. The wigs also ensured the women in the cast consistently had the same look. The production team felt wigs evoked the idea of the quintessential musical. The idea of the chorus girls who can all look similar through the use of costumes and wigs fit the aesthetic of our concept.

The wigs allowed each actress to achieve a period appropriate hairstyle regardless of the actresses' natural hair length, color, or texture. Waves, curls, and swoops could be styled into specific wigs to create the variety of looks we desired. With this freedom, however, came the time-consuming responsibility of styling and maintaining the wigs for the run of the show. The hair and make-up designers spent countless hours styling and setting the wigs; they reached their desired style. The use of wigs also provided a new location to hide microphones. The hair and make-up designers had the added responsibility of collaborating with the sound crew to make sure microphone packs fit securely in each woman's wig. The origin and purpose of this decision is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Lighting Design

When I began to think about the lighting design for this production, I realized I had to separate my natural aesthetic for bold lighting choices from the needs of the show. While I love lighting that features theatrical haze and automated moving lights with ever-changing gobos (ala *Spring Awakening*) that look did not fit my directorial concept for this production. My goal for this production was to find a way to marry my personal aesthetic and concept of this production. *Crazy for You* does not have specific lighting needs imbedded in the script. I knew, however, I wanted to lighting choices to serve three purposes. They had to: (1) evoke the feeling of musical theatre, (2) provide clarity in the storytelling, and (3) provide moments of spectacle. Although I could not initially articulate how lighting evokes the feeling of musical theatre, I was able to produce images that reflected the look imagined. There are several times in *Crazy for You* in which the audience is invited into a fantasy in Bobby's mind. I believed lighting could

help clarify reality from fantasy for the audience. Lastly, I wanted moments of lighting that left a lasting impression of the audience.

As I began to work with lighting designer, she was able to take my abstract ideas, images, and directorial concept and turn them into an actual design. The lighting designer for *Crazy for You* had designed the musicals at Baylor University for several years. She was knowledgeable about the style and potential challenges inherit in the Jones Theater and proved to be a valuable voice during the design process, offering recommendations, warnings, and advice on issues that other members of the team, including myself, often overlooked. She embraced the concept and explored ways for her design to evoke the feeling of an “old-fashioned musical.” The designer’s idea to use footlights in her design was one specific way she was able to incorporate the production concept and evoke the feeling of musical theatre through the creation of what she deemed “musical theatre lighting.” She defined this style of lighting as more presentational with strong color saturation, lighting gobos, and side-lighting.

During the production process, the lighting design was one of the last technical elements to be solidified. She could not finalize her lighting plot, lighting looks, or program cues until the scenic design was nearly completed and she watched a rehearsal to see what areas needed to be lit. While the designer waited, she showed me possible lighting gobos, research images, and attended several different rehearsals. During production meetings, the lighting designer was able to stay abreast of changes in other design areas that would alter her design, as well as give lighting assistance to other areas such as the scenic and properties design.

The Design

The lighting design followed the same color palette of “cools” for New York City and “warms” for Deadrock. Establishing those looks was a simple continuation of the “binary conversation” with the addition of lighting concepts. Typically, when a song starts in a musical, there is a lighting shift. We felt it was important to implore this common conceit in our production, but I wanted to make sure there was a purpose behind the convention. As discussed in chapter two, there are diegetic and non-diegetic songs in *Crazy for You*. I decided non-diegetic songs could quickly shift into a different lighting look because the audience is watching the inner feelings of the performer. The lights needed to reflect this perspective shift. Examples of these non-diegetic songs includes Bobby’s fantasies (“I Can’t Be Bothered Now” and “Nice Work If You Can Get It”) and songs such as “Someone to Watch Over Me” and “Embraceable You.” The design of these looks featured saturated colors to look purposefully theatrical, a clear break from the “reality” of the story. Non-diegetic songs needed to remain in the same lighting look of the scene that preceded it and shift later in the song as the ensemble became more involved. “Slap that Bass” was an example of this convention. It began as a rehearsal so the lighting did not initially shift when the song started. As the rehearsal and cowboys improved, the “magic” of the theatre allowed the lights to change. This lighting choice helped highlight the themes of revitalization and celebration of the theatre.

There were a few scenes in which theatrical haze were used to help accentuate the beams of light. The lighting designer and I felt atmospherics would be an important trait in New York City, where the haze could also be seen as the steam rising from manholes or pollution from cars typically seen in the city. Deadrock, however, is not as

technologically advanced, so the lighting designer and I decided not use haze in those scenic locations. The wide-open spaces of the Nevada called for a clear sky instead of a hazy one. The “Finale” depicts Bobby and Polly living out their dream by performing together. In order to pay homage to the great Ziegfeld finales of the past and stay true to the Deadrock aesthetic the lighting design featured low lying fog rather than haze. Unfortunately, the low-lying fogger did not create the desired look and was cut from the design later in the process.

Collaborations with the Lighting Designer

The lighting designer’s collaborative spirit proved vital to this production. The scenic designer needed assistance on a few projects in the design from the lighting designer. Additionally, the properties artisan needed assistance placing functional headlights on Lottie’s car (discussed later in this chapter). The scenic design for Zangler Theater exterior required approximately 300 marquee bulbs around the signage of the theater, seen in figure A.24. This idea was replicated to a much smaller degree in Deadrock towards the end of the show. At the end of the show, Bobby’s fantasies and reality merge as his dreams comes to fruition.

The final collaborative item between the lighting and scenic areas was the star curtain used in “Shall We Dance” and the “Finale.” Since the scenic designer and I decided against renting theatrical backdrops there was a need for scenery in act one, scene five and the “Finale.” We decided an L.E.D. star curtain would provide the perfect setting for both scenes, seen in figure A.25. The department’s master electrician gathered quotes for purchasing and renting a star curtain. The curtain was too expensive to purchase or rent, so the master electrician suggested the department make their own LED

star curtain. He priced the cost of a plain black curtain and the necessary L.E.D. lights. This option fit within the budget and allowed the department to use the curtain in future productions. There was some concern about how long it would take to construct the curtain, but it was completed within one week. This project proved beneficial for the production as well as the theatre department.

Challenges

Early in the production process, the lighting designer requested the scenic design to allow the lighting ladders in the fly space to be lowered to an adequate position for side lighting, an iconic part of musical theatre lighting in her opinion. She mentioned that she makes that request every year, and it never works out. Unfortunately, the same was true for this production. The scenic elements were too tall and wide to allow the ladders to provide side lighting from her ideal position. The lighting designer took this well and adjusted her plan. She maintained a collaborative attitude throughout the production and proved to be a major asset for the show. She worked closely with many other design areas to bring the production to life.

Sound Design

As expected, the sound design proved to be a major element of the production. Unlike stage plays where performers do not traditionally wear microphones, this production featured 38 performers wearing individual wireless microphones and a live orchestra that was also amplified. The role of sound designer and live mixer for this production went to a senior undergraduate student. I worked with him before and knew he was organized and talented in this area. He was tasked with the responsibility of

blending 38 performers' microphones, the orchestra, and sound cues into a clear, cohesive sound heard over the rhythm of twenty-five people tap dancing. The sound designer was mentored by the sound design professor, who came to assist the designer a few times during his sabbatical, and other technical professors working on the production. Ultimately, the undergraduate sound designer created a successful design and mix for the production. His work was divided into three major areas: balance of aural elements, sound cues, and live sound mixing.

The aural landscape for this production came from the performers on stage and orchestra in the orchestra pit. This production profited from the recent legal termination of specific sound frequencies that rendered a third of the theatre department's current stock of wireless microphones unusable. The sound professor and chair of the department approached the dean of the school for assistance in purchasing new microphones, which led to the acquisition of twenty new wireless microphones, creating a grand total of 40 microphones for our company of 38 performers.

After securing a microphone for each cast member, the next step was to decide where to place the microphones on the performers. The answer came from a request by the costume designer to avoid creating what she called "mic pack tumors" in the costumes.⁸ She requested that since all the girls are wearing wigs, the microphone packs be placed in each female performer's wig. This request led to a collaboration between the hair and make-up and sound crews. Each female performer prepped their hair for the wig and put on a wig cap. The actresses then went to the sound board to pick-up their microphone. The microphone pack was pinned to their wig cap by a member of the sound

⁸ "Mic pack tumors" refer to the large bulge in the back of costumes where it microphone is affixed to the performer. The costume designer wanted to maintain the beautiful lines of her fitted costumes and not the outline of a microphone pack.

or hair crew, seen in figure A.26. After it was secured in place, a member of the hair and make-up crew would place another wig cap over the microphone pack, so no microphone directly touched the performer's hair or wig. Finally, the actresses returned to the wig room and a hair and make-up crew member secured the wig to their head before sound check.

The other live aural element in this production was the orchestra. The balance and disbursement of the orchestra's sound was a major concern during the design process. The music directors and myself were worried the combination of a large orchestra and tap dancing would overpower the singing of the performers. This issue was addressed in three different ways: the depth of the orchestra pit, the placement of microphones on specific instruments in the orchestra, and the arrangement of backstage monitors. The Jones Theater has a hydraulic orchestra pit that is capable of changing depth. The hydraulic system is helpful in discovering the most effective pit depth for balance between the performers and orchestra.

There were disagreements between the two musical directors as to what was the best depth for the orchestra pit early in the production process. The debate over pit depth extended beyond just sound concerns and into other production areas such as the scenic design. The scenic design also affected the possible depth of the pit. Some of the early scenic designs featured a passerelle, seen in figure A.27, from stage right around the orchestra pit to stage left. The passerelle required 5 ft. plugs on both the sides of the stage to provide adequate playing space downstage of the proscenium line. Both the passerelle and plugs needed support legs that rested on the floor of the orchestra pit. The support legs, however, would have shrunk the space for the orchestra players as well as caused

the pit to be locked into a finite position before the orchestra arrived and loaded in their instruments. Additionally, the orchestra pit would have to be locked in place, so the scenic crew could safely complete the scenic design. Both of these scenic ideas were dismissed, allowing the orchestra pit depth to be adjusted to the depth that created the optimum sound balance once the orchestra joined rehearsals.

In the orchestra pit, the music directors requested the same monitor set-up used the previous year during the musical to ensure the cast could clearly hear backstage, offstage, and during tapping production numbers. The sound designer placed microphones on the lead keyboard and routed that sound backstage to monitors for the cast to clearly hear as well as through the house for clarity of the melody with the audience. The placement of the monitors, however, proved to be an issue. The large scenic pieces in conjunction with the large cast size and need for quick change areas in the wings created a lack of backstage space. The sound designer initially decided to hang the monitors upstage left and upstage right, running the cords to the back wall. This placement allowed the speakers to remain in one location and not have to be raised and lowered with lighting ladders during scenic transitions. This placement also avoided running cables through large traffic areas of performers or scenic pieces to ensure there were no interruptions to the sound. The upstage position proved too far away from the performers. The sound designer mentioned the problem to his sound professor who purchased two new speakers that fit in the recessed niches near the downstage proscenium.

The sound cues needed for this production were more a matter of collecting than creation. The sound designer found the right period-appropriate sounding car engine,

telephone ring, cash register, and taxi honk. In addition to the sound cues in the script. The orchestra conductor asked the sound designer to take on a few cues listed in the score, intended to be played by the orchestra. Transferring these orchestra sound cues to the sound designer allowed the orchestra conductor to cut down the size of the orchestra, a necessity for budgetary and personnel limitations. The sound designer was more than willing to assist the orchestra conductor with the sound cues. This type of collaboration and assistance was an asset in the early stages of the design process.

The final element of the sound design was live sound mixing. This part of the design varied slightly each night depending on the placement of microphones, vocal output from performers, or sound output of the orchestra. Each night the designer performed a mic check on each performer to review their levels for that show and ensure their microphone was working properly. He would then do a group mic check with all the performers to eliminate issues of feedback and then conduct a sound check with the orchestra. This information allowed the designer to have all the necessary information before live mixing the performance. He was able to know which performers needed their volume adjusted each night and what he needed to do to achieve the optimum balance and audibility.

Properties Design

There were several properties used during the Baylor production of *Crazy for You*. The majority needed to be collected rather than designed. It was important to me that the props weren't mere set dressing, but held a practical purpose. This was one way to help generate spectacle in the production. Audiences' were caught off-guard as props served more than just their typical function, especially in relation to the choreography in

the production. A piano served as a piano, but also a platform for Irene to seduce Lank. Rope served its normal function as well as to turn the chorus girls into double basses.

The props were divided into two categories, hand properties and choreographic properties. Hand properties needed to be period appropriate and consisted of items such as letters, legal documents, liquor bottles, and blank-firing guns. The properties designer and I wanted items from New York City to reflect the high-society to which Bobby and his mother Lottie belonged. These items were clean and crisp when applicable. The items from Deadrock looked weathered, dirty, and worn. Several items pulled from prop storage needed to be distressed to reflect the worn-down town of Deadrock, yet another way of illustrating the binary between the two locations.

In addition to the properties needed for the book scenes, the properties artisan, choreographer, and I stayed in close communication to gather and create the right items for the plethora of choreographic props. “I Can’t Be Bothered Now” used 1930s candlestick telephones and newspapers, “Slap that Bass” required a double bass and pieces of rope cut to the height of each of the Zangler girl, and “I Got Rhythm” used pick axes, gold sifting pans, corrugated tin, and a variety of pots, pans, hammers, to serve as percussive instruments. Many of these items did not have to be designed, but needed to be structurally reinforced to allow actors to safely stand or dance on particular properties. The properties artisan did choose to make the pick axes for “I Got Rhythm” rather than purchase them. This choice was made in an effort to relieve budgetary concerns and keep the performers safe during the dance.

There were a few props in the production that needed to be designed. The largest of these projects was Lottie Child’s car. The script calls for a car to drive on stage that

also featured an elevator that lifts Bobby from the cab to the roof during “I Can’t Be Bothered Now.” It is not necessary to have the car to produce the show, but the production team felt the car was an iconic element of the show and evoked the “musicalness” we were aiming for in this production. The car followed the same functionality as many of the other choreographic props. It functioned expectedly as a car when it traveled on stage and unexpectedly when the elevator raised Bobby through the roof of the car’s cabin. This was a complicated, expensive, and labor-intensive prop to build. After deciding to use the car in this production, the production’s team first thought was to rent the car in hopes of alleviating some of the workload of the prop designer and scenic shop staff. In the course of our rental research, we did not find a car that met our standards in regard to craftsmanship and aesthetic, seen in figure A.28. The stage/production manager and I approached the prop artisan for this production with the idea and needs of the car and the disappointing rental options. I expressed a desire for this car to be featured several times over the course of the show and he agreed to build the car for the production.

The props artisan began his process by gathering visual research of 1930’s cars and discussing the differences with me. We ultimately decided to go with the 1924 Alfa Romeo, seen in figure A.29, because that model felt like the expensive car Lottie would purchase. After we decided on a design, the properties designer and I discussed the functional and spatial needs of the car. The car needed adequate room in the hood for a Zangler girl to pop out during a dance number, an elevator to lift Bobby to the roof of the car, space to place the props needed in the number, a sitting area for performers to ride in the car, and a method to create the illusion that six Zangler girls were in the small

vehicle. The prop artisan synthesized this information and his visual research to develop technical drawings to construct the car. He built the base and wheels out of plywood, essentially carving a car into existence, seen in figure A.30. He included a steering mechanism allowing the car to make wide turns on stage.

Another prop that needed to be designed was the traveling tumbleweed, seen in figure A.31. The prop was used in act one, scene three, the first time the audience is introduced to Deadrock. As the cowboys sing “Bidin’ My Time,” they stop in the middle of the song to watch a tumbleweed slowly roll across the stage. This was a property I wanted in the production to comically emphasize the dullness of the Deadrock. After the tumbleweed was built, the prop designer rigged the tumbleweed on a fishing pole with clear fishing line that was pre-set at the top of the show. During technical rehearsals, the string repeatedly broke after being caught on a set piece or tangled around a performer’s leg. Ultimately, the tumbleweed was given thicker string and pulled off stage slowly by an actor rather than reeled in on a fishing pole and repeatedly received laughs from the audience.

Properties Challenges

During the design process, the biggest factors that affected the property design for this production were budget and time. While all of the props did not have to be designed, many had to be purchased in large quantities for each cast member to have enough through rehearsals and performances; in addition Lottie’s car was an expensive and time-consuming prop to build. Initially, I wanted the car to be motorized, but there was not enough money in the budget to accommodate that request. When the prop artisan began constructing the vehicle, he presented me with two options for propelling the car: a pedal

method or simply walking the car, which he called “Flintstone power.” The latter required a hole to be placed beneath the chauffeur’s feet so he moved the car by walking. This action would be covered by the masking on the bottom of the car. We eventually decided on Flintstone power due to time and financial constraints. The final product was successful and can be seen in production photos in Appendix B.

The budget also led us to cut another large prop from this production. The libretto asks for the Cowboy trio to enter Deadrock on an old beat-up pick-up truck to contrast the Lottie’s luxury vehicle. Since the properties designer already committed to the labor-intensive task of building Lottie’s car for this production and I knew the budget and space backstage were limited, we replaced the pick-up truck with a large hand cart. The previous year Baylor University produced *Fiddler on the Roof* and still had Tevye’s cart. The prop designer was able to make minor alterations to the cart to make it fit this production.

The properties designer spent the majority of his time building Lottie’s car with his remaining time spent reinforcing choreographic props needed for rehearsals. The tumbleweed was on the backburner for the prop designer as he worked on completing his other projects for the production. As technical rehearsals approached, he began to feel like he did not have enough time to build the tumbleweed. I felt passionately the tumbleweed would be a great addition to the scene and was not ready to eliminate it from the show. I volunteered to build the tumbleweed; the prop designer agreed and provided resources he had available. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Despite budgetary concerns and time constraints, the props artisan was able to provide properties that served the needs of the show and enhanced the overall production.

The Building Process

During the summer, after the technical designs were finalized, the technical director began constructing the set from the scenic designer's renderings. Time, once again, proved to be an issue in completing the set. Baylor theatre students aid in the construction of the scenic, costume, and lighting designs for productions as part of their course studies in theatre. Since the build started in the summer there were no students available to help. Additionally, two of the four scenic shop staff members were leaving the university to pursue new opportunities and another staff member was scheduled to be out of the country for most of the summer. Eventually two new shop members were hired to alleviate the shortage of human resources. As the build progressed, the technical director did not feel as if he had enough time to finish the design. He presented his concerns to the stage manager and myself. The cast rehearsed in the Jones Theater, which is the same place that set was being constructed. While this benefited me and the cast, it forced the scenic crew to stop working in enough time to clean up before rehearsal began. I chose to adjust our rehearsal schedule by pushing the start time of rehearsal later in the evening to give the scenic crew more time to work on the set. The technical director appreciated the compromise and was able to complete the design before technical rehearsals began.

Earlier in the rehearsal process, the stage manager and I grew concerned about the masking on the line set schedule.⁹ Working with the set pieces in rehearsal and seeing the performers in the space raised concerns about where curtains and legs could be hung to accommodate speedy scenic transitions and backstage masking. The stage manager and I

⁹ The line set schedule is the list of items that will be flown in and out during a production. The line set schedule informs all the designers what pieces will be hung on which battens.

brought our concerns to the scenic and lighting designers, but they believed the line set schedule would serve the production and did not need to be altered. We trusted their opinion and continued rehearsals according to the line set schedule.

While rehearsing in the same place the set was being constructed allowed the company to become comfortable with the stage and spacing, it also created a challenge in regard to wing space. The proper placement of scenery and props was difficult to implement with the necessary show conditions in the space during rehearsals. The size of the scenery required the wings to be cleared so set pieces could roll on and off stage as quickly and safely as possible. This could not be done until the scenic crew was done building the set and struck their tools and building materials from the theater. The stage manager worked with the technical director to gradually clear out the wings to give the performers and scenery more room backstage so they could run the show with accurate transitions. Unfortunately, there was not enough time between when the wings were cleared and the beginning of technical rehearsals to solidify the scenic transitions.

Technical Rehearsals

Technical rehearsals (tech) mark a shift in the rehearsal process. The director takes a step back in the leading of rehearsal so the stage manager can oversee the implementation of all the technical elements. The goal is to ensure the show runs safely and smoothly, each technical element is timed appropriately, and the show looks the way the director intended. During tech, the backstage crews join rehearsals to aid in moving scenery, costume changes, and running the light and sound boards. All the elements of the production are integrated during these rehearsals, including the orchestra. I was privileged to have the stage management professor, whom I wholeheartedly trusted and

respected from previous collaborations, serve as the stage manager for this production. She is experienced at calling productions like *Crazy for You* that feature a multitude of moving parts. Many of the technical elements such as lighting, sound, costumes, hair, and make-up ran smoothly. There were minor notes that were tweaked and implemented over night in regard to timing, volume, wig styling, and fit of costumes. The biggest challenge of the technical rehearsal process stemmed, yet again, from the scenic transitions.

The stage manager was tasked with the challenging job of incorporating the scenic crew into each scenic transition in only two hours and completing a cue-to-cue that included over 300 light cues in the course of six hours. It is not uncommon for a cue-to-cue for one act of a large musical to last five hours, so the allotment of only six hours seemed daunting. Time for the cast's daily rehearsal safety needs such as their fight call, dance safety call for "I Got Rhythm," and time for the lighting crew to conduct a blackout and headset check infringed on the stage manager's time for the needs of the technical rehearsal. In an effort to conserve time, the stage manager and I invited the scenic and costume crews to join rehearsal a day ahead of schedule. The extra time allowed the crews to watch a run of the show one night so they could shadow the action backstage the next night in hopes of acclimating them to the show faster. The stage manager and I discussed our concerns about time limitations, but hoped the incorporation of the crews slightly earlier would alleviate potential problems. We decided to carry-on with the plan until we knew if we would fall behind schedule.

The first night of technical rehearsal put us behind schedule. The company did not complete the scenic transitions, but was forced to begin the cue-to-cue portion of rehearsal out of necessity. The stage manager suggested moving on without completing

the scenic shift rehearsal with the entire crews because each transition would be addressed in the cue-to-cue. The stage manager and I hoped to get through the end of the first act, but only reached the beginning of act one, scene six. A large amount of time was spent incorporating the car into act one, scene two for the first time. The Pink Zangler girls, Bobby, Irene, Lottie, Perkins, and the chauffeur rehearsed where to place the car to mask the entrances and exits through the car as well as how best to work the elevator. In addition to rehearsing with the car, valuable time was lost coordinating transitions between the set pieces on the deck with the scenery and curtains that flew in and out. It was a tedious rehearsal without much progress. Not one of the goals for the evening was fully accomplished.

The stage manager and I decided to continue the cue-to-cue on the second day of technical rehearsals and skip the scenic shift rehearsal to conserve time. The stage manager felt pressure to complete the cue-to-cue by the end of the night because there would be no time to continue the cue-to-cue at the next rehearsal. The next evening was scheduled to incorporate the costume crew for a full-dress rehearsal with the orchestra. These circumstances led the stage manager to try to complete the cue-to-cue in the allotted time because whatever was unfinished would have to be practiced in the course of the rehearsal with the orchestra and costume crew. Part of the rehearsal time was designated for the costume crew to rehearse quick changes with Bobby, Polly, and Tess while other members of the cast worked with the choreographer on changing a bit of choreography in "I Got Rhythm." Once the cue-to-cue rehearsal began, the process moved quicker than the day before. The crew had experience setting up most of the scenic locations so time was not spent correcting positions of set pieces. Unfortunately,

there were still issues with the order, efficiency, accuracy, and speed of items that had to be flown in or out during scenic transitions.

After the second night of technical rehearsals, the stage manager and I determined the production needed a few more crew members on the deck crew and fly rail to create seamless transitions. She enlisted help from a class of freshman theatre majors that were not assigned as a crew member for any production during the semester of *Crazy for You*. She was able to find several volunteers to help ease the challenge of the transitions. While the added crew members were a blessing, they also required training, which meant going over all the scenic transitions again, but time was of the essence. The cast and crews were called earlier to rehearsal and asked to stay late to solidify scenic transitions with the new crew members. The extra fly rail members, however, helped smooth out the fly rail cues. With more hands, more pieces were able to fly simultaneously allowing the scenic shifts to function like scenic choreography rather than a disjointed shift.

As the scenic shifts improved, the issue of backstage masking became an issue. As the legs were flown out during transitions, the offstage wings were completely visible to the audience. The problem was compounded by the cyclorama lights illuminating the area, drawing the audience's eyes to the wings. Unfortunately, when technical rehearsals began it became obvious the masking needed to be flown out to move set pieces on and off stage. Although this was not ideal, at that point in the process there was nothing to be done. All the sets were constructed and designs were implemented in accordance with the finalized line set schedule. The cast and crew pushed set pieces as far offstage as possible. I told the cast to be mindful of sightlines and black fabric was placed over the large white finale staircase whose storage position was in view of the audience during

transitions. After the technical rehearsals, the lighting designer remarked that masking is always an issue in the Jones Theater and *Crazy for You* was no exception.

Although scenic transitions took up the majority of time, there were other struggles that demanded my attention during technical rehearsal. The first was being the physical well-being of the cast. This production required a large amount of physical effort. The choreographer encouraged the students to stretch before rehearsals and performances and the stage-manager implemented a variety of calls before runs to ensure the cast members' safety. Despite our best efforts, the cast suffered several injuries at the beginning of the technical process. One student tore the tendons in his hand during a stunt in "I Got Rhythm," while another tore his meniscus during a tumbling pass in the same number. An actress injured her foot during the choreography of "Girls Enter Nevada" and another actor suffered an injury to his foot at home after rehearsal. The four performers attended rehearsal, but did not participate in the blocking or choreography to help them recover in enough time to perform in the production. Their inability to perform prohibited the cast from performing certain stunts and lifts since the entire company was not physically able. The entire cast was not able to perform until the day before opening night.

The implementation of technical elements brings the possibility of complications and conflicts between the different design areas as several different designers' work is integrated at one time. One example of this conflict arose between the costume and properties area. During an early dress rehearsal, the actor playing Bobby leaned against a support beam in the car which produced grease stains on his costume. Understandably, the costume designer immediately instructed the actor to get out of the costume so she

could remove the stain before it became permanent. This prompted the costume designer to stop other performers from using the inside of the car for the duration of that rehearsal. Afterwards, the props artisan and costume designer discussed other lubricants that could be used to make the elevator function without the possibility of staining the actors' costumes. The properties designer agreed to strip the car of the grease and experiment with using a bar of soap as the lubricant. The compromise pleased the costume designer and proved to be an effective alternative.

In addition to injuries and stained costumes, there was an evening of technical rehearsal in which the light board would not properly function. The light board did not recall cues or individual lights and had to be rebooted several times. Once the board seemed to be working, the lighting designer realized the board changed the length of all the lighting cues. The designer attempted to solve these problems without interrupting the rehearsal since she knew time was limited, but as the problem became more complicated she asked the stage manager to hold. There was no point in having a technical rehearsal in which the light cues were not accurate. The lighting designer and master electrician tried a variety of problem solving methods and eventually got the board running again. The production used several wireless lighting sources and hundreds of cues recorded in great detail. The thought of losing all that data was frightening and prompted the lighting designer and master electrician to develop a back-up plan in case the light board malfunctioned again.¹⁰ Although a significant amount of rehearsal time was lost in the process of resolving the issue, we were thankful to not have to re-cue the entire show.

¹⁰ Both the lighting designer and master electrician suffered a similar problem three years prior when a rainstorm “fried” several lights and erased the cues for the musical. The lighting designer was forced to re-cue the show approximately six times. Neither of the two wanted to repeat that process again.

Conclusion

The design process for *Crazy for You* was an enjoyable experience. Initially I was concerned about leading an artistic team of theatre faculty, but the gracious and collaborative spirit of the creative team eased my apprehension. As we began the process, everyone embraced the concept and built on the idea with their own sensibilities. This design process took persistence, problem-solving, and organization to find the best solution for the overall production. The most challenging aspect of the design process was the scenic area. Finalizing the placement of set pieces so they allowed the show to flow seamlessly proved difficult, and was not fully resolved until technical rehearsals began. Regardless, the designers did an excellent job creating a beautiful world in which the show could exist. The next step in the process was to synthesize my research, concept, and understanding of the show into rehearsal with the cast to bring this piece to life.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Rehearsal Process

Introduction

The design process for *Crazy for You* revealed the true scope of the production and helped prepare me for the rehearsal process. While designers planned, constructed, and implemented their work over the summer months the student performers did not return for rehearsals until the beginning of the fall semester. The casting, rehearsals, and performances were the final pieces missing from the production process. As the director, it was my job to work with the artistic team to ensure the readiness of each performer and the execution of directorial concept during the six-week rehearsal period. This chapter will explore the collaboration between the music directors and choreographers as well as the casting and rehearsal process through the opening night of *Crazy for You*.

Collaboration: Working with Music Directors, a Choreographer, and Actors

Theatre is described as a collaborative art and musicals are proof of the validity of that statement. Directing a musical requires collaboration with both musical directors and choreographers in addition to the more standard members of the creative teams, such as costume, lighting, and scenic designers. I was fortunate to have two music directors and a choreographer working alongside me on the production. All three individuals have worked at Baylor for several years and served as members of the musical's artistic team numerous times. I was the novice of the team and leaned heavily on my artistic partners for a knowledge of teaching methods and effective rehearsal techniques that worked in

the musical rehearsal process in previous years. The expertise and experience of the music directors and choreographer proved invaluable during the rehearsal process for *Crazy for You*. When trouble areas arose in music or choreography, the music directors and choreographer were quickly able to diagnosis the cause and, more importantly, implement a solution. They worked proactively to give each cast member the instruction, time, and resources they needed to successfully perform their roles. Their collaborative spirit and expertise helped the rehearsal process run smoothly.

The Music Directors

Two music directors served on the production team of *Crazy for You*; they divided their responsibilities into two categories: vocal and orchestral work. One music director focused on working vocally with soloists and creating stylistic choices in the ensemble numbers while the other was in charge of teaching vocal parts to the ensemble, accompanying rehearsals, and recruiting, rehearsing, and conducting the orchestra. I held a few preliminary meetings with the music directors to discuss the scheduling of rehearsals and allotment of time for different vocal needs, but many of the artistic choices were made in rehearsal with the performers. There were, however, a few exceptions.

The practicality and logistics of offstage singing was an early concern for the music directors. Due to the heavy volume of choreography, the music directors and I decided to use the New York ensemble as offstage singing voices during the large production numbers. The music directors made this request in years past to disappointing results. In previous musicals, attempts were made to provide a live video feed of the conductor to actors singing backstage, but a slight delay in the video footage produced unsatisfactory results. For this production, the music directors requested the scenic design

provide areas of visibility, so the actors backstage could see the orchestra conductor in the pit and avoid any need for a video feed. The clear line of sight would allow offstage cast members (specifically the New York Ensemble) to vocally support their fellow cast members dancing during large production numbers. Although the request was made in the beginning of the design process and agreed upon, areas for offstage visibility to the orchestra pit did not make it into the final set. Instead, cast members stood in the stage right portal when singing offstage. This location allowed the performers to see the orchestra conductor and stay out of view of the audience.

The second musical choice which influenced the design was the choice to omit the song “Tonight’s the Night” from our production. Cutting the song helped eliminate a scenic location which saved labor and budget money and trimmed the length of the show. The musical directors and I decided the orchestra would play the song as underscoring during the scene instead. The music directors, scenic designer, and technical director agreed to this modification. During the rehearsal process I discovered the repercussions of this decision.

The Choreographer

The choreographer (a former graduate of Baylor University’s M.F.A. directing program) and I shared the unique connection of being the only two graduate students of the program to direct a musical for our thesis production. Her experience as a director/choreographer proved invaluable during the production process. She and I discussed how the choreography needed to help tell the story.

In the early stages of the design process, the choreographer and I met to discuss how to approach dance for the production, gimmicks to include in the choreography, and

her opinion about adhering to Stroman's original work. There are several choreographic moments that are specifically orchestrated to match Stroman's choreography. We had to decide if we wanted to pay homage to sections of her original work or go in a different direction. The choreographer and I decided to replicate the moments we felt needed to match the orchestration and leave the rest of the choreography up to her artistic discretion.

The choreographer and I also went through the score and specified which numbers she was choreographing and what numbers I would stage. It can be difficult in dance heavy musicals such as *Crazy for You* to delineate when blocking ends and choreography begins and vice versa. We discussed each song, specified who was responsible for what songs, seen in figure A.32. We agreed to go back and smooth out any areas that seemed disjointed or incongruent after the show was choreographed and staged to ensure we created a seamless and cohesive production.

Working as a Team

I believe collaboration does not erase clearly specified roles. I have found when team members know what is expected of them, the process runs smoother, especially in a musical such as *Crazy for You* where it may be difficult to define when one artistic area ends and another begins. In our initial meeting the musical directors, choreographer, and I went over roles and expectations for this production process. Since I was new to the team, it helped me gain a better understanding of how we would function together and seamlessly integrate each artistic area into each cast member's performance. We believed that our working relationship needed to model the way we hoped the students would interpolate each artistic area. The music directors, choreographer, and I stressed the

importance of understanding they were not singing, dancing, and acting as separate entities. The show would suffer if they mentally partitioned each area that way. Instead, we stressed the integration of the music, acting, and dance. We could only achieve artistic synergy when each area was combined.

The choreographer, music directors, and I established our own method for ensuring clear communication and consistent collaboration. The first step was to make sure we all started on the same page. I created a document comparing the Broadway cast album to the London cast album, which listed my thoughts, notes, and ideas for our production, seen in figures A.33.1 and A.33.2, I shared this document with the artistic team so we could nail down ideas and discuss different artistic approaches. The notes were especially helpful to the music directors to gain a better understanding of my directorial vision before they began to work stylistically with the cast.

After preparing for rehearsals, the time came for the music directors, choreographer, and I to collaborate with one another during actual rehearsals with the cast. We depended on each other to uphold the artistic choices agreed upon in our initial meetings to achieve a cohesive production that aligned with the directorial concept. This may seem obvious, but an artistic team that does not trust one another does not function efficiently. I did not micromanage the designers for the production; I continued that practice with the artistic team in the rehearsal process. The music directors, choreographer, and I trusted one another to pull out the best performances possible from the cast. After a song, scene, or dance number was on its feet we talked with one another about what needed refinement, more rehearsal time, or simply did not work. These conversations could have easily become antagonistic if the team did not share a trusting

and cooperative spirit. Our conversations were focused on transitioning the students from technical proficiency of the music, choreography, and acting to integrated performances by triple-threat performers.

I should note there were moments of miscommunication and frustration among the artistic team during the rehearsal process, but the overall experience was positive and collaborative. I am grateful for their attention to detail and continual efforts to strive for excellence in every artistic area. I know their work was invaluable to the process and much of this production would not have been possible without their efforts. Our close and collaborative working relationship allowed us to address challenges that arose during the production such as dilemmas with casting, the execution of choreography, and time management during rehearsals, all of which will be explored later in this chapter.

The Audition Process

The Baylor Theatre production calendar dictates the schedule for each mainstage show by establishing deadlines for budgets, renderings, and finalization of designs. This structure also guides the scheduling of auditions, designer runs, and technical rehearsals. Since the musical is the first show of the fall, there is not enough time to audition, rehearse, and build sets and costumes once students return for school. Therefore, musical auditions are traditionally held at the end of the previous spring semester to give the design areas adequate time to work on the production over the summer months. The structure of the audition, however, is left to the artistic team to determine.

Preparing for the Audition

Auditions for *Crazy for You* were scheduled for April 1, 2017. The music directors, choreographer, and I met to decide what would be most helpful to see from the students in the general audition. We unanimously agreed that we needed to hear each student sing a 32-bar cut of a musical theatre song (composed by or in the same vein of the Gershwins) to see how they handled that style of music. There was debate if dance should be a component of the initial audition or callbacks, since the dance call is traditionally part of the callback for Baylor's musical auditions. Since dance is such a major part of *Crazy for You* and a defining element for the ensemble and some of the principal roles, I requested a dance combination be part of the general audition. I knew the choreographic element of the audition would take a considerable amount of time, so I decided to conduct the acting auditions during callbacks.

Once the details of the audition were solidified, I asked the choreographer if she felt comfortable teaching the dance combination a week before the audition. I knew several students only recently began taking tap classes in an effort to prepare for the audition.¹ I was not interested in the students being flustered as they attempted to quickly learn a dance combination under the stress of an audition setting. I wanted to see what they were capable of with preparation and hard-work because growth was more indicative of the rehearsal process. The choreographer agreed to teach the audition combination in her tap classes (and three evening sessions for those who were not enrolled in her class or wanted extra rehearsal time). By teaching the choreography in

¹ The department offered additional sections of tap the semester of musical auditions so every student felt they had adequate opportunity to learn the basic skills necessary in preparation for the audition.

advance, the artistic team was able to see what each performer was capable of with rehearsal time, persistence, and hard work.

Auditions and Callbacks

On the first day of auditions, approximately 80 theatre majors auditioned for the choreographer, music directors, myself, and a few of the professors (serving in an advisory capacity) in the department. The audition began with the vocal component. Generally speaking, the students selected songs in the proper style that allowed them to showcase their vocal and acting ability. After the vocal part of the audition, the stage manager divided the students into groups of four or five and allowed them to perform the tap combination twice. The choreographic element proved more difficult, especially for the men.

The creative team and professors agreed that many of the students fared better by learning the choreography beforehand. The extra preparation time allowed many students to perform the combination instead of simply trying to get it right. While many students performed the choreography with a great deal of showmanship, many of them were “faking” the actual tap steps.² The dance audition revealed the chasm between the experienced dancers and the beginners to be wider than many of the artistic team initially thought. Despite the difference in ability, potential was evident. The choreographer and I agreed that we did not need perfect tap dancers but rather performers who, we believed, could learn the steps and appear competent. After the dance portion of the audition and in consultation with the creative team and professors I created a callback list for principal

² “Faking” the choreography refers to performers who appear to be doing the step correctly and with ease, but in actuality they are failing to execute the correct tap sounds associated with choreography.

characters and the ensemble. The callback list, vocal sides, and book sides were emailed to the company, so they could be prepared for callbacks.

Callbacks were held the following day, April 2, 2017, and included musical, choreographic, and acting components. The music directors led the beginning portion of the day by having everyone sing a cut from “Slap that Bass”. The music directors briefly reviewed the music before dividing the students by vocal part into single file lines. One person from each line sang so the music directors could hear how well each student could hold their harmony part. The music directors repeated this process with the “The Real American Folk Song,” to see which men could play the cowboy trio and other ensemble cowboys. The music directors also felt comfortable with their notes from the solo vocal auditions and cut of “Slap that Bass” to cast the Zangler girls without a conducting a women-only vocal callback.

After the vocal callback, everyone moved to the dance studio to watch the students perform the dance cut again. Before they danced, I stressed again the importance of performing the dance combination and not just trying to get it right. I wanted to see them smiling and confident no matter how nervous they felt. The students were divided into specific groups for the callbacks. The actors called back for the role of Bobby performed the dance combination together so the creative team could evaluate their dance ability in comparison to one another. The same was done for the role of Polly and Tess. The rest of the students (that were only called back for consideration in the ensemble) were divided into equal groups. After everyone danced the combo, the creative team, professors, and I took a short break to discuss our notes from the vocal and dance portion

of the callback. We deliberated briefly and released everyone that was not called to read for a principal role.

Following the general auditions and callbacks, we narrowed down the cast list to two Irene candidates, three Bobby candidates, and three Polly candidates. Each Bobby and Polly candidate performed act one, scene six three times, so the artistic team could see every potential pairing. This reading portion of the audition allowed me to see how each performer embodied the characters and if any pairing of performers shared a chemistry that would be helpful in the relationship between Bobby and Polly. Each performer brought different strengths to the role making the decision difficult and I felt uneasy about committing to a final casting decision at that moment. My advisor for the production and two other faculty members were out of town for the auditions and callbacks, so I decided to callback the Bobby, Polly, and Irene candidates again on April 3, 2017, so the absent faculty members could weigh in on the decision and give myself more time to make my choice. An extra day would also allow the performers extra time with audition material learned at the callback. I also gave each performer a note to incorporate into their performance to see how well they took direction.

After the final day of callbacks, the faculty and I discussed the casting possibilities, and I listened to the fresh perspectives of the professors that missed the first two days of auditions. They believed all the students they watched were all capable of performing the roles, but each faculty members had a different preference and deferred to me and the rest of the creative team.

Casting

Casting a show is one of the most crucial moments in the production process. A director can easily create additional challenges in a production by selecting the wrong people in pivotal roles. Directing this musical in an educational setting added the additional pressure of making sure each performer I cast was placed in a position to be challenged yet also successful. Ultimately, I let go of the fear of making the wrong choice and with the guidance of my artistic team and professors selected the performers that I believed could enact my vision for this production.

Supporting Characters. The acting portion of the callback clarified much of the casting for the supporting characters. In preparation for callbacks, I made a detailed schedule of which actors would read what scenes to ensure everyone student read the role for which they were called back while still being flexible if someone on the creative team had a new casting possibility to consider. Students were given the opportunity to ready multiple scenes with different groups of people. As students read I would give them notes or adjustments to see how they handled taking direction. The student cast in the roles of Lank, Bela, Tess, Lottie, Eugene, Everett and Patricia demonstrated a strong sense of comedic timing, creativity, self-awareness, and overall preparation. The only supporting role that remained unclear at the end of callbacks was the part of Irene. I narrowed down the options to two potential actresses. Both women brought unique qualities to the role, one as an actress and the other as a singer. Since Irene only sings one song, I decided to cast the performer that provided versatility and a powerful stage presence. I believed she was capable of delivering the strength, sass, and comedy of the role.

Bobby and Polly. After listening to the input from the faculty, choreographer, and music directors I decide to cast Bobby candidate number two. The first day of callbacks he was not as engaging as the other two candidates, but he incorporated the notes I gave him. Although he was not the strongest dancer, he seemed to be the best combination of the triple threat necessary for this production. The choreographer and I agreed that he showed dance potential and was teachable. In the role of Polly, I ultimately cast candidate three. She had the look of an ingénue, yet played the role with a tinge of toughness. I was drawn to the honesty and simplicity in her performance and viewed her tap dancing skills as a major asset for the production. The Bobby I selected was not a natural tap dancer, so having a Polly that was confident in dance would be an asset. If the actor playing Bobby was struggling his partner would be capable of helping him when the choreographer was unavailable.

Zangler Girls. We had a plethora of women to choose from for the Zangler girl ensemble. The music directors, choreographer, and I each presented a list of names we would consider placing in the ensemble. The list was well over the ten available spots, so we began to trim it. I relied heavily on the input of choreographer because she would be working most with the ensembles. Since the women were playing showgirls, we had to take body type into consideration as well as dance ability, vocal type, potential for growth, and the overall look of the chorus girls as a group. After deciding who would make-up the ensembles, I felt uneasy about the physical and racial composition of the Zangler girl ensemble. While we used the above criteria as a guide, it was not a hard rule of exclusion. I did not want an ensemble of identical women, but an ensemble that represented diversity in a variety of ways while still being able to perform the needs of

the role. After expressing my concern to some of my professors, I asked the choreographer and called the costume designer if they were comfortable with adding one more member to the Zangler girls and cowboy ensemble. Both collaborators agreed and we finalized the Zangler girl ensemble at eleven women. The other women who we felt were strong vocalists but not as skilled at tap dancing were added to the New York ensemble with the understanding that they would also sing backstage during production numbers to enhance the sound.

Cowboys. While the addition of an extra Zangler girl was necessary to match the talent pool of women in the theatre department, that choice created a challenge in the casting of the cowboy ensemble. There were not many men whom the creative team believed had the vocal and dance ability to serve in the cowboy ensemble for this production. Based on the callbacks, the music directors offered a short list of actors capable of handling the tight three-part harmony of the cowboy trio, but many of those names were on the choreographers “do not cast list” based on their dance ability. The team began to comprise and re-envision how we would handle the choreography. The choreographer and I discussed the possibility of not having all the cowboys dance in all the production numbers, or varying choreography based on the skill of the performer. I suggested using some of the choreography for comedic effect and finding ways to embrace some of the men’s inability rather than fight against it during the rehearsal process to which she agreed. The creative team agreed the two candidates for Bobby that did not get the role would move into the cowboy ensemble, but the ensemble was still two men short of the eleven needed to equal the Zangler girl ensemble for choreographic balance.

As we were casting the cowboys, I felt like the men available for the final two spots were not capable of handling the requirements of the roles. A professor suggested holding the final two cowboy spots as TBA and giving an opportunity to the incoming freshmen to audition. The creative team and I liked the casting possibilities this offered. Two men we had been considering for the cowboy ensemble moved to the New York Ensemble in case we did not find two freshmen males to complete the cast list. After the Baylor theatre students left for summer break, I emailed the incoming freshmen men an invitation to send me a recording of them singing the same callback cut the current Baylor students sang from “Slap that Bass.” I received seven submissions and after discussing the submissions with the music directors chose to cast one student as a cowboy singing tenor and move one of the men originally cast as a New York ensemble member to the cowboy ensemble, replacing him with another freshman male.

I cast a total of 38 performers in the production, the largest cast in a Baylor University musical to date. The decision was not unanimous among the faculty and myself, but everyone understood my reasoning and respected my decisions. In *A Director Prepares*, Anne Bogart describes “the necessary cruelty of decision.”³ She asserts “Art is violent. To be decisive is violent.”⁴ I had to make the “violent choice” of eliminating possibilities by making a final decision on casting. I considered the needs of the show, what each performer would bring to the production, and whom I felt could best bring my concept to life. The cast list was emailed to the department on April 7, 2017. I felt at peace with the cast list and was ready to begin the rehearsal process.

³ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 44.

⁴ Bogart, *A Director Prepares*, 45.

Rehearsal Preparation

The volume of material in the musical and difficulty level of the choreography prompted the music directors, choreographer, and I to think of ways to use the summer break to our advantage and alleviate the challenge of starting from ground zero when the students returned for the first day of rehearsal. We decided to give the cast clear instructions and expectations of the level of preparation with which we expected them to arrive with on the first day of rehearsal. Before the students left for summer break, I called a company meeting and instructed the cast to learn the score and libretto before they returned for the first day of rehearsal. The music directors and I wanted to ensure the cast understood their individual preparation over the summer was the beginning of the rehearsal process, not a mere suggestion.

As a director, rehearsals can be tedious as you wait for the cast to complete the necessary foundational step of line memorization. *Crazy for You* requires a fair amount of physical comedy, which is impossible to accurately rehearse as long as actors are holding their scripts in their hands. Looking ahead at the requirements of the show and the allotted rehearsal time, I asked all actors with principal roles to return from summer break with their lines fully memorized. Each cast member was given access to a pdf of the script to ensure they had the resources they needed to successfully prepare for the production. Having the cast arrive memorized allowed me to spend more time in rehearsal working on characterization, motivation, and comedic action rather than waiting for line memorization.

The music directors made a similar request of the cast. Each cast member was expected to return to rehearsal with their lyrics and pitches at least ninety percent

memorized. One of the music directors recorded each voice part and accompaniment tracks for every piece of music in the show. The recordings (as well as a chart explaining what vocal part each cast member was assigned for each song) was made available to each member of the cast over the summer. The music directors made similar requests of the musical casts in past years with varying degrees of success, so they made sure the cast had every tool they needed to return fully prepared.

The beginning stages of learning the score and libretto were possible for cast members over the summer months, but there was not much the cast could do to begin learning the choreography while scattered around the globe over the break. *Crazy for You* is a dance heavy show and we suspected the cast would not learn the choreography quickly. A few faculty members suggested having the students return a few days early for “boot camp” rehearsals. These faculty members said it was successful for *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, another tap-dance intensive musical. Having the cast return early allowed them to have a concentrated time to learn choreography before they were forced to deal with the demands of their full collegiate class schedules.

Over previous semester and subsequent summer, I spent time preparing myself for the rehearsal process. I read the libretto and listened to the cast recordings countless times. I made it my goal to become an expert on *Crazy for You* so I could be prepared for any question a designer or cast member might ask. Part of my research consisted of seeing as many productions of the show as possible. Before rehearsals began I was able to watch the original Broadway production archival recording at the Performing Arts Library of New York City, Drury Lane’s production in Chicago, Susan Stroman’s one-night only anniversary production at Lincoln Center, and Papermill Playhouse’s

production on YouTube. Watching all of these productions allowed me to see how different directors have interpreted the work, what jokes have aged with the production, and what parts, if any, of the show need to maintain true to their original conception. After watching each production, I took note of similarities, differences, what worked, and what did not. I then synthesized the information and began to shape my production of *Crazy for You*.

The *Crazy for You* libretto is not dense or complex, but I did not want to show up underprepared for the production. I asked my cast to put in preparatory work and I wanted to lead by example. Some may think analysis of Ludwig's script unnecessary, but I used the Hodge method to analyze the libretto and ensure I was not overlooking information that would be useful to me or my cast. The Hodge analysis helped me nail down my thoughts and personal interpretation of the work. I then allowed my analysis to guide the scoring of my script for beats and the action of each scene.⁵

Finally, I blocked the show before rehearsals began. The size of the cast and demands of the show did not allow for organic blocking.⁶ I needed a way to quickly disseminate blocking in rehearsal so I could see the scene on stage and make the necessary adjustments. The size of the cast, however, made pre-blocking difficult. I could not fully imagine and retain where performers were in large group scenes. I borrowed a method from my production advisor and created an avatar for each cast member, seen in

⁵ The scoring of the script is a process in which you note the beats or shifts in a scene, as well as possible tactics, objectives, and actions.

⁶ Organic blocking is a style of blocking in which actors walk where they naturally feel led to go. I did not think this was a feasible method of in blocking in this production. I feared the cast size and presentational style of the show did not warrant such a timely approach to blocking.

figure A.34.⁷ This allowed me to physically place their avatar on the ground plan and have a better idea of each scene's composition. Although my initial blocking was not final, it provided a foundation from which to work with the cast on blocking.

The Rehearsal Structure

I divided the rehearsal process for *Crazy for You* into two phases: learning and perfecting. The cast had a large volume of music, choreography, and staging to learn for this production. Learning the material, however, was just the first step. After grasping the material, the cast spent hours giving attention to the most minute details. What may seem like pointless details for some was our pursuit of perfection.

Rehearsals for *Crazy for You* were normally 6-10 p.m. Monday through Friday and I attempted to maximize that time in an effort to get our production as close to perfect as possible. I explained to my cast that good was not the goal. Good allows a group to settle, while perfection requires everyone to continue working. I knew with live theatre there would be no perfect show. Perfection was not the true aim, but continual growth. Growth does not come from achieving perfection, but the disciplined pursuit of it.

Boot Camp

Fall semester classes began August 21, 2017, but the cast was called for “boot camp” from August 17-20. During “boot camp” the cast got a chance to spend focused time on the production; the schedule can be seen in figure A.35. The first day was largely

⁷ My advisor used pennies or army men with cast member's name or character names on them. I used clothes pin with the cast member and character name on it. They were also color coded so I quickly knew if they were a Pink Zangler girl, Silver Zangler girl, cowboy, New York ensemble member, or principal character.

dedicated to ironing out any confusion related to the music. However, the cast came back prepared with an excellent grasp on the music. The music directors were able to go beyond merely checking pitch accuracy and began to make stylistic choices and artistically shaping the songs with the company.

The remainder of boot camp was dedicated to choreography. Since the students were not in class we were able to rehearse the majority of the day. The music directors, choreographer, and I thought choreography would be the best use of this extra time. The earlier the cast was able to learn choreography the more time they would have to perfect the dances. Over the four days of boot camp, the cast learned the choreography to four large group production numbers in their entirety. The cast also began the process of learning the choreography for “I Got Rhythm,” but was unable to complete the number during boot camp.

I also felt it was important for the company to spend some time building a trusting and encouraging community. A fun activity or experience can be influential in facilitating that bond. On the first day of “boot camp,” the production team told the cast they were blocking act one in its entirety that evening. When they arrived at rehearsal we sent them on a scavenger hunt around Waco, which ended at the home of one of the music directors. She provided dinner for the cast and provided a location for the cast to share their adventures with one another and connect before the rehearsal process was fully underway. The cast enjoyed their evening together and felt excited and energized about the journey ahead of them.

Standard Rehearsals

Boot camp provided a great head start on teaching the material to the cast. As we transitioned into our standard nightly rehearsals, my first priority was to teach the remaining material that was not completed during boot camp. The designer run was scheduled for the end of the second week of rehearsal, so time was of the essence.⁸ With the help of the stage manager, we were able to schedule simultaneous rehearsals to maximize our time. While I worked on a scene between Bobby and Polly, the choreographer would work with the Zangler girls, and the music directors would be working with the cowboys. This type of scheduling allowed us to have the entirety of the show taught in two weeks, with the exception of a portion of the “I Got Rhythm” choreography.

After all the material was taught to the cast, the music directors began to work alongside the choreographer. When the choreographer reviewed a song’s choreography, the music directors would begin the rehearsal by reviewing that song musically with the cast. The collaborative rehearsal method the musical directors and choreographer practiced allowed the students to combine the choreography with their singing in hopes of reinforcing the idea of synergistic performance. It is not uncommon for performers to struggle with combining their vocal part and the choreography of a song. This time effective rehearsal method allowed music and choreography to be rehearsed simultaneously while encouraging the cast to not mentally partition the different artistic areas.

⁸ Designer run is an early run through of a production performed for the designers that do not typically come to rehearsals. The run through gives them a chance to see the needs of the production, ask questions, and make alterations to their designs before technical rehearsals begin.

The final piece of the rehearsal process was my staging and scene work with the actors. Knowing music and choreography would be the most time-consuming elements to teach and require hours of refinement later in the rehearsal process, I decided to dedicate the entirety of boot camp and the majority of the first week of rehearsal to those elements. I felt the staging could be done quickly after the music and choreography was taught since the cast memorized their lines during the summer and the libretto was not complex. In an effort to help accommodate the schedule of the choreographer, music directors, and scheduling conflicts among cast members I decided to not block the show chronologically. This rehearsal method allowed me to spend concentrated time with particular performers on days they were called for blocking, rather than constantly shifting characters in an effort to move linearly through the libretto.

As the goal of rehearsals shifted from teaching to perfecting, the allocation of rehearsal time became an issue. After we began running the show in rehearsal, the choreographer, musical directors, and stage manager had long lists of items they wanted to review for precision and safety, causing us to run out of time to accommodate everyone's requests. In an effort to be collaborative, I often found myself giving up my time for necessary scene work with the cast. I expressed my concern to the stage manager and we began to develop creative scheduling solutions to help reclaim my directorial time. The stage manager and I worked together to develop a detailed schedule for each artistic area that allowed me and the other members of the artistic team the rehearsal time they needed with the cast.

Rehearsal Challenges

Every production brings its own challenges. There were areas of the production I knew would be difficult while other struggles emerged as surprises over the course of the rehearsal process. The artistic team and I were well aware the volume of choreography and lack of trained dancers would require us to allocate a large portion of rehearsal time to learning and cleaning choreography. We did not anticipate our estimation of allotted time for choreography would still not be enough for the large-scale production numbers like “I Got Rhythm.” Issues of characterization and scenic transitions, which I thought would come easy to the cast and crew, required more attention than I expected. These challenges became the focus of several rehearsals in an effort to find favorable solutions.

Do I Have Rhythm?

During “boot camp” I was pleased with the progress the cast was making. The company was picking up the dances quicker than the choreographer and I expected. The choreographer was completing the teaching portion of each production number within her designated time so the rehearsal calendar remained on schedule. The dances were not perfectly clean, but they were in a place the cast could rehearse on their own and come back improved from the initial rehearsal. I created a private Facebook group for the cast to help encourage this growth. At the end of a choreography rehearsal, the number was video recorded and uploaded to the Facebook group to help cast members review the dance. This proved to be a valuable resource over the course of the production and especially during “boot camp” when they learned several dances in a short amount of time.

While most choreography rehearsals remained on schedule, that was not the case for the act one finale, “I Got Rhythm.” This ten-minute dance number includes tap dancing, lifts, a rhythm section in which actors used pots and pans to create music, and several choreographic tricks that involved particular props. The creative team was well aware of the demanding nature of the song and dedicated eleven hours over one day of “boot camp” to complete the number. The choreographer and I knew the number would be intense, but we underestimated the time needed to complete the dance.

As I mentioned previously, the choreographer and I decided to use some of Stroman’s choreography and our choreographer’s original work for the remainder of “I Got Rhythm,” personalizing the gimmick parts of the number to the strengths of the cast. She asked me to collaborate with her and brainstorm ideas for “I Got Rhythm” on its designated day of “boot camp.” She already choreographed the tap dancing sections of the number, but wanted my input deciding what props and gimmicks to incorporate into the dance. She and I had a natural rapport with one another that allowed us to easily bounce ideas off one another until we found the right solution. I asked her to think of every “crazy” choreographic idea she dismissed as impossible and use them in the choreography for this production.

The best example of our brainstorming was the use of corrugated tin sheets. Stroman originally used the tin sheets in her choreography to create a surface to brush taps across, carry Polly onstage, create a slide, and a few other tricks. We decided to use the first three gimmicks and then developed the section we called “The Spiderman.” We were inspired by the idea of the performers not being bound by gravity while tap dancing (à la *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark*). We attempted to find a way to create a box of the

tin sheets and have one of the Zangler girls tap on all four sides of the tin sheet box. The actress would begin by tap dancing on the tin sheet on the floor underneath her. Then she would be lifted by one of the cowboys as she tapped up the tin sheet to her left, tap upside on the tin sheet above her, and back down the sheet to her left, and finally return to the ground. The choreographer and members of the cast tried to safely problem-solve the practicality of the idea. The choreographer volunteered herself as a test subject and used the wall of the proscenium to test different ideas because the tin sheets were not yet built. Since we waited until the day of rehearsal to develop these gimmicks, there was no way for the properties artisan to have the props we would need at the rehearsal. The timely method of trial and error and lack of vital props prohibited us from finishing the song during “boot camp.”

The cast learned sections of tap choreography and held in place during the parts that were not yet choreographed. The choreographer and I discussed what props we needed and made sure the stage manager notated the list in the rehearsal report. I followed up with the properties artisan and he agreed to get the props to us as soon as possible. We did not receive all of the props until a week and a half later. Once the props were ready, the choreographer, a few ensemble members, and I met outside of rehearsal time to figure out our modified version of “The Spiderman” and gimmicks involving the pickaxes. Meeting outside of rehearsal allowed us to save valuable time by troubleshooting and problem-solving during our free-time, so the choreographer could succinctly teach the rest of the cast during rehearsal.

Eventually the cast learned the number in its entirety, but the challenge became cleaning a number of that length and intensity which featured tumbling passes, lifts,

partnering, tap-dancing, and a multitude of props. I knew we could not continue to dedicate full nights of rehearsal to the number and still complete the rest of the show. Instead, the choreographer, stage-manger, and I decided to run the dance daily. This allowed the cast the opportunity to clean a bit of the number daily, become confident in the choreography, and solidify the necessary safety precautions.

The number was completed well before the technical rehearsals, but I was not totally satisfied. Since the number is ten minutes in length it needed to build in intensity, energy, and grandeur. There was one section that worked against the momentum I believed the number needed. I spoke with the choreographer about my concern and she agreed, commenting that she knew it needed to be changed but was not sure how to alter the choreography. She met with her assistant choreographer the next day and developed three options, which they presented to me. We discussed the options and I suggested a few ideas to enhance that section of choreography until we found the solution that pleased all of us. The choreographer taught the change to the cast during a technical rehearsal. We were confident that our cast could handle the last-minute change in choreography and felt it was a necessary risk to take.

The choreographer's attention to detail, collaborative attitude, and willingness to go the extra-mile proved invaluable during this production. During the course of the rehearsal process, we kept coming back to "I Got Rhythm." The choreographer and I knew the number needed to be an explosive ending to the first act. In the end, over twenty hours of rehearsal time were dedicated to that production number alone.

Characterization

It is not uncommon for young performers to struggle with understanding and incorporating the style of a production into their personal performance or characterization. I encountered this situation throughout the rehearsal process for *Crazy for You*. The undergraduate students in the Baylor theatre department devote a large amount of time exploring acting techniques in realism. Their classes train them to use the text to develop psychological motivation for their characters. The development of their artistry is strengthened by their course work, but the students sometimes have a difficulty determining which acting technique aligns with which performance style.

As I mentioned previously, *Crazy for You* is a musical comedy with a shallow libretto in which the characters, with the exception of Bobby and Polly, are one-dimensional for comedic effect. The cast struggled with embracing this style of characterization. They wanted to play these characters in a realistic fashion. I repeatedly asked the cast to stop playing the show as realism. We talked several times about the heightened nature of musical comedies, which effected the world of the show and their characterization. As cliché as the old adage “Louder!, Faster!, Funnier!” may be, it fit this production more than “What is your character feeling?” I did not discount the students doing the necessary homework to understand the relationships between the characters on stage and the needs that motivate their actions, but it was not our top priority. I was interested in creating an exaggerated, fast-paced style to match the levity of the libretto. When the students attempted to use their realistic techniques, the show became heavy and laborious. I worked with the cast to better understand the comedic aspects of rhythm, timing, speed, and physicality. Once the students understood my vision for the style of

the production, they began to build their characters with a sense of freedom and creativity they had not done earlier in the rehearsal process. The cast stopped waiting to find every answer in the text or for me to give them every single detail. Instead, they began to fill in holes of the story and experiment with different choices that matched their characters' needs and the style of the production.

The challenge of characterization extended beyond the book scenes into the choreography of the production as well. The choreographer and I spent several rehearsal days working on "Shall We Dance" and "Nice Work if You Can Get It" with the actors playing Bobby and Polly. These two dance numbers serve as a storytelling device of the romance between the two characters, but the two actors struggled with doing more than just executing the dance steps. During rehearsals of these numbers, the choreographer and I pushed the performers to think of "Shall We Dance" as a first date performed through dance. The choreographer and I deemed Bobby and Polly's dance duets "danceversations." The choreographer created a dance that journeys through the emotions of new love: apprehension, playfulness, joy, excitement, and passion. "Nice Work If You Can Get It" functioned similarly to "Shall We Dance." Over the course of the dance number, Bobby realizes he needs Polly to achieve fulfillment.

The true expression of joyful give and take the two performers exude during both dances are vital to storytelling of the production. The choreographer and I tried several different methods to elevate Bobby and Polly's performance during the moments of choreographic storytelling. We talked to the pair, adjusted tempos with the musical director, and encouraged them to see the dance as a scene rather than choreography to execute cleanly. Over time, the two actors reached a level of performance that pleased us

both. The performers were perfectionist and did not feel comfortable attempting to go beyond precise execution of the choreography until it was flawless. Although they were working hard and I appreciated their effort, I told them they had the wrong mentality. A performance that incorporated the vulnerability, joy, and chemistry of a newfound love was more intriguing than a perfectly performed dance without the storytelling. With the choreographer's blessing, we gave the duo permission to make the number less perfect and more alive. This tactic seemed to be the most effective way to get characterization and storytelling through the choreography.

Transitions

Due to the common episodic nature of musical theatre and the specific scenic demands of *Crazy for You*, transitions were a vital part of the production. I told the scenic designer in our preliminary meetings that I never wanted to use blackouts as a method for scenic transitions. I realized, however, that I never explained to the cast that they would be executing the scene transitions in character, rather than crew members who would just provide additional assistance when needed. The implementation of smooth transitions was a process that stretched from the rehearsal period into technical rehearsals.

As the date of the designer run approached, I needed to implement scene transitions into the rehearsal process.⁹ The cast was moving the set during the early stages of the rehearsal process, but no one had a specific responsibility. If the cast was doing a run through of the show everyone would stop the run at every scenic shift so the cast and stage management team could transition the set. Constantly stopping during a

⁹ A designer run is a run through of a production for the designers to see the show with the performers before it is time to implement the technical aspects. The run allows designers to raise questions and concerns and provide adequate time for adjustment for themselves as well as the director.

run through prevented the cast and I from fully grasping the flow of the show. I created a spreadsheet of scenic transition responsibilities and briefly talked through them with the cast before the designer run to help eradicate confusion as to who was moving which set piece.¹⁰ As I made the shift assignments, I knew there was not adequate time to fully rehearse and incorporate the transitions into the show before the designer run. I considered not attempting the transitions for the designer run, but upon further thought felt the designers needed to see how I intended the show to function. I asked the cast to think ahead, review their responsibilities, and do the best they could during the designer run.

While I thought the cast did a good job getting through the scenic shifts without rehearsal time, my thesis production advisor and a faculty member who attended the run told me it was imperative to fix the scenic transitions. I agreed with his note and explained this was only a rough draft of transitions. He encouraged me to think of the transitions as a continuation of the story's action rather than a scenic shift. This style of transition would give the actors motivation for moving scenery and prevent the play from halting for transitions.

I took my advisor's note and began reworking the transition assignments with his advice in mind. I talked with the cast and encouraged them to think of the fluidity of scenic shifts as equally as important as their choreography in production numbers. In book musicals, the plot is advanced through musical numbers. I asked the cast to realize in our production, the action also continued through the scene transitions. Music,

¹⁰ The task of assigning scenic transition duties commonly falls under the job description of the stage manager, but the stage manager and I agreed that since these transitions would involve actors moving in character it would be best for me to take the lead on assigning the roles as an extension of blocking.

choreography, scenes, and transitions were all ways in which we were communicating the story of *Crazy for You*. They understood the concept, but the implementation of each transition was more complex than I originally thought. The size and weight of the set pieces, minimal offstage storage space, specific timings tied to the score, and quantity of transitions created unique challenges that needed to be worked out during rehearsals. We dedicated over two days of rehearsals solely to choreographing and cleaning scenic transitions. It was difficult to dedicate so many rehearsal hours when there were scenes and production numbers that also needed attention. I reminded myself that it was not wasted time, but an investment. The scene transitions were just as vital as the other elements of the production

As I worked to incorporate my advisor's note, I realized there were two types of scenic transitions, shifts within songs such as "Could You Use Me" into "Shall We Dance" and shifts between scenes. I found the most successful way to solve the transition between scenes was to layer the transitions with a musical payoff, choreography, or dialogue. I talked with the music directors, choreographer, and stage manager about ways to add or tweak music and choreography so transitions could be layered in this fashion, all of whom were agreeable to the idea. After the scenic transitions were solidified, I communicated the changes to the lighting designer who agreed to watch a few rehearsals before technical rehearsals, so she could adjust her design to accommodate the revised transitions.

One example of the newly revised layered transitions was the musical payoff added after "Naughty Baby." The cast was struggling with quickly shifting from act two, scene two (Lank's saloon) into scene three (Gaiety Theater) and setting up the benches,

chairs, and table necessary for the scene. I decide to extend “Naughty Baby” as the scenic transition occurred. This change required assistance from the music director who served as conductor of the orchestra to communicate the change to the orchestra, added choreography from the choreographer, and a transitional lighting look from the lighting designer. The added payoff, however, was effective. It provided extra time for the cast to execute the shift while the audience watched a small continuation of the Lank and Irene plotline.

One transition challenge I solved was not part of the show’s construction but a result of a decision made during the design process. As I stated previously, the music directors and I decided to cut “Tonight’s the Night” from act one, scene ten. During the rehearsal process, I realized the song was used to give the actor playing Bobby time to change from Bela to Bobby after “Embraceable You” and back to Bela for scene eleven. Without the song there was no time for him to change, and the show stopped for him to complete the quick changes. There was no longer time to learn the song, so I decided to treat the scene like a crossover in which different cast members were prepping for the opening night performance.¹¹ I rearranged the dialogue to give the actor playing Bobby/Bela a chance to make his quick changes. The new arrangement of the dialogue helped solve the problem, but I was not pleased with the crossovers. I tried a variety of ideas and eventually settled on treating the scene like the company’s final rehearsal. The cast reused choreography from “Slap that Bass” and moved in different formations as the dialogue happened downstage of the ensemble. Act one, scene ten provided the same

¹¹ Crossover scenes are short scenes in musicals in which characters talk as they walk from one side of the stage to the other. Many times these scenes happen in front of a curtain or backdrop to hide a scenic transition that is happening simultaneously.

textual information in a new way and allowed for a smooth transition into the final scene of act one.

The time spent working and reworking scenic transitions was tedious, but vital to improving the overall flow of the production. Those hours proved invaluable when technical rehearsal began and scenic transitions were rehearsed with the addition of the fly rail, costumes, and the entirety of the production crew and technical elements.

Opening Night

Crazy for You opened at Baylor University on September 27, 2017. While the performance was not technically perfect, the tumbleweed did not make it across stage and the confetti during the “Finale” was lackluster, the show was a success. The audience was receptive to the performance and offered the cast a standing ovation at the end of the curtain call. The cast maintained the high level of energy, focus, and precision necessary for this musical. Most importantly, they managed to capture the earnest joyful spirit at the center of the piece and give that offering to the audience.

The rehearsal process was an enlightening experience. The cast managed to learn difficult choreography, bring new life to the Gershwin’s classic songs, and discussed how to stylistically approach an old-fashioned book musical. I was excited to see the growth of the cast from the first day of boot camp to the moment the curtain closed. The collaboration between the music directors, choreographer, and myself was an ideal blend of trust, support, and encouragement. I truly believe the production required creative designers that actually functioned as a team to synthesize each element of the performance. Although I felt prepared during the rehearsal process, the technical process proved more stressful than I imagined. There were times when I did not know if we

would be able to resolve the scenic transition issues and have a fully healthy cast before the show opened. Ultimately, the hard-work and tireless efforts of a company of approximately 100 artists, crew members, and designers brought the production from a concept to a fully realized production.

CHAPTER FIVE

Crazy for You Reflection

Introduction

Crazy for You was performed at Baylor University September 27 through October 1 and October 4 through 8, 2017. The production was an overall success with positive feedback from patrons and faculty. Audiences appeared entertained and engaged with the musical. I recognize, however, that I may be too involved in this production to accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the overall production. In an effort to receive a more accurate evaluation, I looked to my professors and mentors for their assessment of the production. This chapter will examine the audience and critical reception to the conceptual, design, and directorial choices that culminated to create this production of *Crazy for You*, as well as a self-analysis of my personal strengths and areas for growth as a director during this process.

Reception

Crazy for You was a hit with the community. Six of the ten performances were sold out and over 3,000 tickets were sold for the run of the production. Audience members seemed thoroughly entertained and receptive to the joyful spirit of the production. An email from a patron stated, “I loved the musical. I sat there with a smile upon my face.”¹ In fact, several patrons that attended the first week of the run returned to see the production the second week. The audiences’ expressiveness provided a great

¹ Baylor patron, e-mail message to author, October 7, 2017.

energy boost to the cast during their exhausting performances. Many of the jokes, especially in the scene between Bobby and Bela that leads into “What Causes That?” received uproarious laughter at each performance. The spectacle of the large scenic pieces, the car with the elevator, beautiful lighting, and lavish costumes were praised as “first rate.”² Bobby’s ascension to the top of the car and Polly’s quick change before the “Finale” often received gasps and applause. These types of surprises kept the audience engaged in how the story unfolded. Several patrons also commented on the orchestra and the quality of the students’ singing voices. The choreography, however, received the greatest praise. Audience members were “was amazed at the athleticism of the actors,” and impressed that the Baylor students were capable of successfully mounting such a dance-intensive production.³ Almost every performance received a standing ovation. At some performances, audiences stood through the entirety of the curtain call cheering and applauding the cast. It was a true pleasure to see audience members smiling and dancing as they exited the theatre after a performance.

The faculty was also pleased with the production. Several of them commented on the fun and excitement the production generated in the audience by the unceasing energy of the cast. The faculty also praised the seamless nature of the production. The transitions allowed the show to move without making the audience wait for the action to continue. Many of the professors commented on the successful casting of the production. The principals were in roles that showcased their talents, while the ensemble worked as a cohesive unit throughout the production. Many of the faculty members have worked at

² Baylor patron, e-mail message to department chair, October 3, 2017.

³ Baylor patron, e-mail message to author, October 7, 2017.

Baylor University for many years and believed this production featured the best choreography they have seen performed for a Baylor University musical. They believed the collaboration between the choreographer and I enhanced the storytelling in the production, elevating the choreographic moments to more than just dance. One professor stated, “Thank you for your hard work and dedication! It really paid off. The dancing and integration of the dancing and scenes was flawless. You took what could be a cheesy show and established a world in which we looked forward to the dancers in Bobby's mind.”⁴ This positive feedback was echoed by other members of the Baylor University Theatre faculty. Despite the massive undertaking of this particular production, the faculty felt I managed to mount a successful production. Their support of the work the cast, designers, and I put into this production was encouraging to hear.

Strengths

In reflecting on my experience during *Crazy for You*, I recognize personal growth and maturation in my ability as a leader, collaborator, and director. To some, those three qualities could seem synonymous, but I believe their differences are distinct. Leadership was necessary to keep the design team and cast working as a cohesive unit. As a leader, I chose to work collaboratively with the artistic and design team. As a director, I worked to clearly communicate my vision and obtain the best work from everyone around me as well as myself. The combination of these attributes proved to be an asset to me during the production.

⁴ Baylor professor, e-mail message to author, October 5, 2017.

Leadership

The scale of this production required strong leadership to give the creative team and cast a unified vision and practical steps to achieve our goal. There were countless details, opinions, and discussions that required clarification and action. Although I wanted to work collaboratively with everyone, there were several times when I had to make the final decision. This authority was not completely new to me. I held the final authority in previous productions I directed, but this was the first time I held the final power of decision in place of my professors at Baylor University. I spent the previous two years learning from the faculty and absorbing their expertise and wisdom, but with this production the balance of power shifted. I no longer was expected to do as they said. I was expected to take their recommendation in consideration with my own vision and make the decision with which I felt most comfortable.

Although I held the final authority in regard to production decisions, I depended on the work of my designers, music directors, and choreographer and wanted to ensure they knew I valued, respected, and appreciated their hard work and dedication. The size of this production was daunting for all involved, especially the designers who were tasked with creating the world of our production. I made a point to do everything in my power to make their job as easy as possible. This included moving up some of my personal deadlines, shifting rehearsal schedules, and being as flexible so designers could have as much time as possible to work on their design areas.

Working with the cast required a different style of leadership than what I employed with my design team. The first two years of the M.F.A. program in directing at Baylor University are centered around the graduate students doing workshop scenes with

casts made up of undergraduate students. It is not uncommon for the graduate director to form a friendly rapport with the students. The graduate director is often closer in age to the students, not an instructor of courses for theatre majors, and often are not a part of the audition process for mainstage productions. The graduate director must learn how to navigate the transition from friendly colleague to their new role as director and authority. This shift in relationship can be difficult for both the graduate director and undergraduate students. I was pleased to hear from a faculty member who sat in on a several rehearsals in various stages of the production process that he believed I handled my role of director well. He applauded my ability to maintain the friendly rapport I built with the undergraduate students in my previous two years of the program, while also garnering the respect and authority as their director. He spoke highly of both my casual interactions with the cast and the moments in which I demanded more of them in their performances. Through this process, I discovered both elements, the casual and the structural, are necessary, but they must both be earned. I am proud to say that I achieved both.

Early in the rehearsal process I asked the cast to be mindful of all the designers and technicians working to bring the show to fruition. I asked them to follow my lead in doing everything in their power to make the designer's lives easier by promptly signing-up for fittings, responding quickly to questions from stage-management or designers, and arriving prepared and early for calls and fittings. During the production process, the students and I became fully aware of the volume of work required to build *Crazy for You*, so we decided to provide encouragement to the design team. We received a list of snack items the designers and technicians enjoyed from the department receptionist. The cast then divided the list and brought the items to create thank-you baskets for "Designer

Appreciation Day.” I know this was not a necessary gift, but it was a kind gesture the designers and technicians appreciated, especially since it came from the students. Many times, the designers are thanked as an afterthought when the production is closed.

“Designer Appreciation Day” allowed the cast and I to express our gratitude for the designers themselves and not just their work. Every item of the production was not completed when they received their gifts, but the baskets thanked the designers for the tireless hours they were putting in the production and served as an encouragement to persevere through the upcoming technical rehearsals.

The students’ efforts for “Designer Appreciation Day” are one of my proudest moments of the production. Their actions were selfless and helped cultivate a deeper sense of community within the production. The students looked beyond themselves to appreciate the talent of their fellow artists. I was proud to know my leadership style cultivated an environment in which gratefulness, encouragement, hard work, and selflessness were valued. I viewed “Designer Appreciation Day” as a manifestation of the collaborative spirit that infused the entire production process of *Crazy for You*.

Collaboration

Over the course of the production, I realized my leadership style worked best in a collaborative environment that allowed each person to contribute to the process. When I began the production process, I felt a pressure to be a brilliant director who provided every idea to the team. This feeling created unnecessary fear and anxiety. After talking with my advisor, I was reminded of the falsity of this idea. Theatre is a collaborative art form. The show would be better if I trusted my design team and worked with them instead of trying to have them work for me.

The idea of trust became vital to the collaboration. During the design process, I was fully aware I did not have as much experience working on Baylor's musical production, but the rest of my team had several years of experience. I relied heavily on their knowledge to avoid pitfalls they previously experienced in the Jones Theater and challenges inherent in the musical production process. I developed my directorial concept, voiced my expectations, and expressed my vision so the designers, musical directors, and choreographer were on the same page. Once that was established, I trusted the team to do their jobs. I chose not to micromanage their efforts but state my ideas, concerns, and affirmations when they shared their work with me. Our production meetings allowed the entire team to stay abreast of design decisions and voice their concerns to further develop ideas, allowing the creative team to work as a brain trust. An idea grew and developed as each designer stated their input and opinion. The emphasis was not on the ownership of an idea, but the search and development of the right idea. The team worked as one cohesive unit spurring on one another.

The collaborative working relationship of the team was most clearly illustrated through my work with the choreographer. We both recognized the importance of the choreography as a foundational element in this production. The overall aesthetic of the "old-fashioned" musical placed an emphasis on dance and our production of *Crazy for You* needed to do the same, while still following the tradition of the book musical as a fully integrated element of the production. We continually shared questions, concerns, and ideas with one another. My background in choreography and her background in directing allowed us to better understand one another's perspective. Suggestions were always welcomed and often caused us both to build upon the original idea to create

something better. The choreographer and I continually challenged one another to never settle on an idea we thought was mediocre. I truly believed our collaboration elevated the choreography in the production to the same vital artistic element it was in the original production. The choreography was the star of the production when the show premiered and it was the highlight of our production at Baylor University by evoking the style and charm of the “old-fashioned” musical, while also unifying the storytelling.

The process of collaboration extended into my work with the cast. I thought of myself as a collaborative director with actors before I began my graduate studies. Through my course work in the graduate directing program at Baylor, I recognized my lack of trust and authentic collaboration with actors. As a former high school teacher, I was accustomed to giving very specific directions to the young actors. Instead of shaping an actor’s performance, I created their performance. Aware of this tendency, I made a point in this production to not dictate but work with my cast in the creation of their roles. I did not want to spoon feed them information. The cast worked within the framework of the script and directorial concept to build their performances. I urged the cast to take my initial blocking and their understanding of their character and bring fresh ideas to each rehearsal. Several members of the cast added comedic bits and specificity to relationships between characters that are not clearly delineated in the libretto. I was then able to develop and refine their ideas. Cast members felt comfortable to suggest ideas and knew their ideas would be considered. The collaboration between the creative team, cast members, and myself created a positive environment throughout the entirety of production process. There was a mutual sense of trust and comradery that strengthened the creative team, cast, and overall production.

Direction

While the process was collaborative, I was still charged with the responsibility of overseeing the production and working with the designers and cast to bring my directorial vision to life. No matter what happened, the responsibility stopped with me. This duty seemed daunting as I became aware of the size, scale, and financial investment in the production. I did not, however, let the pressure and anxiety dictate my choices. My time at Baylor was dedicated to my growth as a theatre director, and my thesis production marked the culmination of my graduate studies. I believe *Crazy for You* displayed my personal growth as a director.

Despite constant collaboration, there were times when there was not a consensus among the team or times I disagreed with an opinion of a designer, music director, or choreographer. As I mentioned previously, I spent the previous two years learning from several of the professors on the design and artistic team for this production. My initial inclination was to defer to their opinion and trust their expertise. With this production, however, I worked to synthesize the criticism of others and filter their opinions through my directorial vision, understanding of the material, and knowledge of the cast's strengths. I trusted my team, but there were times when I dissented from their recommendation or pushed for a different option. This was evident in deciding who to cast in the role of Polly, solidifying the scenic design, and working with the choreographer. When I disagreed with my team members I was forced to address the issue quickly and respectfully to prevent wasted time and maintain a positive working relationship with my team. We were always able to find a solution that both parties found agreeable. I realized collaboration does not equate constant agreement, but rather

constantly striving towards a common goal, while allowing others to voice ideas, suggestions, and solutions throughout the process.

This production process also refined my understanding of style. The size of the production did not allow me to be the sole overseer of the style of the production. As the director, I needed to communicate my concept and style of the production to my designers and cast. Before a thesis production in Baylor's graduate directing program, graduate students produce several workshop scenes in which the director serves as the costume, lighting, and scenic designer. These projects teach students the skill of translating a text into a visual world inhabited by characters. The process makes the graduate directors aware of how their directorial concept affects costumes, lighting, and the overall style of the scene. Since the director wears so many hats, the process of clearly communicating directorial vision to others members of the design team during a thesis production can be challenging. I was warned about this potential pitfall by faculty members and made a point to clearly communicate my desired aesthetic for the production.

The flow of the production exemplified the style I worked to incorporate in my production of *Crazy for You*. I described the show like a freight train that made two stops, intermission and the ending. My desire for a production that never seemed to stop affected the technical design as well as the performances of the cast members. I told the scenic designer early in the process that I did not want to use any blackouts to facilitate transitions, so the scenic designer, lighting designer, choreographer and I worked to create transitions that allowed the production to continually progress. In regard to the actors, the imagery of the freight train directly related to the energy level necessary in

each of their performances. I never wanted their energy to dip, but surge the action forward into the next scene. This choice was exhausting for the cast but exhilarating for the audience. The continuous action and energy prevented the show from feeling long and laborious by constantly giving the audience new stimuli.

The process of directing *Crazy for You* proved both challenging and rewarding. In reflecting on my experience, I am able to recognize areas of personal growth from the time I started in Baylor Theatre's graduate directing program two years ago. My leadership is more focused, I have a deeper understanding of what a collaborative process should look like, and I possess experiential knowledge of how to clearly communicate and achieve my vision as a director. Reflecting on the experience, however, also brings up areas of the production that were not as successful, which also needs to be discussed as areas for future growth as a director.

Areas for Growth

While the production was successful overall, in hindsight there were areas I wish I handled differently. A graduate faculty member at Baylor encourages his graduate students to take risks without regard for the fear of failure. He believes you learn more from a mistake than a success. Viewing challenges in the production with this lens allows me to translate errors into education. The management of the production, refinement of comic bits, and stagnant blocking were elements of the production that did not fully meet the standard of excellence I strived to attain.

Management of the Production

Crazy for You proved to be a larger production than I anticipated. The musical was a drain on all of the department's resources: financial, personnel, labor, and time. The design process was exhausting and frustrating for the designers who were not sure they had enough time to fully realize their designs to the professional standard to which they were accustomed. As the director, I became responsible for balancing the needs of the rehearsal process with the needs of the designers to mount a successful production. Reflecting on the process, I recognize areas in which I failed to strike the optimum balance between the needs of the show and the work I requested from the designers.

The scenic design for *Crazy for You* was mentioned in previous chapters as a challenge. In the early stages of the design process, two faculty advisors warned the scenic designer and myself about the unique attributes of the Jones Theater. Both advisors encouraged the scenic designer and I to tape out the proposed design on the stage floor to fully grasp how the units would function in the space. The scenic designer, stage manager, and I measured out the scenic units in the space and made minor adjustments before finalizing the scenic design. After finalizing the design, I feared Lank's saloon unit was too big for the space, but I thought there was no time to alter the design. I rationalized the size of the unit by reminding myself of the functionality the set piece required and the fact that approximately 26 cast members needed to be in that scenic location at one time.

Once Lank's saloon was built and in the space the reality of the size and weight of the set piece was undeniable. The technical director and scenic crew did all they could to make the wagon as light as possible. They placed the best casters available on the piece

to help it roll with ease, but the unit was still heavy and difficult to move. The saloon required several actors and crew members to move it for transitions. The most difficult part being the amount of force it took to get the unit moving. This effort to move the unit required more time than we originally anticipated during scenic transitions, so several hours of technical rehearsals were dedicated to practice the timing of the transitions with all the other technical elements.

The Baylor faculty members with which I spoke thought the production was too large for the Jones Theater space, and I agreed with their assessment. I should have listened to my intuition in the early stages of the design process and worked with my scenic designer to develop a design appropriately scaled for the space. A scaled-down scenic design would have alleviated some of the stress of the designers on the production team and simplified the scenic transitions that commandeered much of the technical rehearsals.

In conjunction with the over-sized scenery, the number of performers in the space led to crowded stage pictures. The congestion occurred mostly in scenes set in Deadrock, Nevada that involved the cowboys, Zangler girls, and principal characters performing production numbers such as “I Got Rhythm,” “Slap that Bass,” and “Stiff Upper Lip.” The choreography required space between the performers to ensure safety, clarity, and visual focus. The scenery, however, and the size of the ensemble limited the amount of useable performance space. There were moments in which the stage was too congested to clearly define choreographic formations or draw appropriate focus. This lack of focus made some moments of choreography appear sloppy rather than precise as the choreographer worked hard to obtain from the cast.

The size of the cast also impacted the amount of specific attention I could give to individual cast members, particularly the ensembles. The production featured several moving pieces and artistic elements that required my attention. I simply ran out of time to focus on the minute details that help create the world of the play. If I had more time, I would spend time with the ensembles to make sure they were always fully engaged with the action of the musical. I did not have enough time to make sure they all had the same grasp of their scenes, their function within the scene, and how they could help deepen the audience's understanding of the production. As an educator, I do not regret providing an opportunity to so many students. Baylor University Theatre only does one mainstage musical a year and I set out to include as many students as possible. The drawback, however, is the inability to spend concentrated time with every performer to create the specificity that enhances a production.

Refining the Comedy

The undergraduate pool of actors that auditioned for this production all had a different skill set. I attempted to assemble a cast that was well-rounded as a group, so one person's weakness could be covered by another performer's strength. As I discussed in chapter four, characterization was a challenge for this musical. The cast struggled with grasping the style of the piece, but throughout the rehearsal process, the cast grew in areas they struggle initially. Cast members who struggled with tap improved on the choreography while others that struggled with the music, improved vocally. The trouble occurred when I recognized the growth of an individual in a specific area was still not at the necessary level for performance. The actor who played Bobby was a good example of

an actor who grew leaps in bounds during the rehearsal process, but whose own limitations became evident as the rehearsal process continued.

As I mentioned in chapter four, I did not feel Baylor's theatre department had a young male actor that was a perfect fit for the role of Bobby. The artistic team and I decided to cast the actor with the most potential in the role. The potential we saw, however, was not endless in every area. The actor playing Bobby did not have natural comedic timing or fully understand how the comedy functioned within this show. There were moments in the production when his comedic deficiencies were evident, especially in comparison to the strong comedic actors cast in the roles of Lank and Bela.

The limitations of the actor playing Bobby's comedic expertise was most clearly illustrated in act two, scene two when Bobby reveals the truth of his double identity to Polly and other cowboys in Lank's saloon. Bobby awakens from his drunken night with Bela to talk to Polly, but has forgotten he is still in his disguise. The script calls for three comic moments that rely solely on the actor playing Bobby: the moment in which he wakes up hung-over, his realization that he is still in his Bela disguise, and his explanation of the truth to Polly. In our production, the actor cast as Bobby struggled with these moments. I thought since the scene was short and mainly involved three actors it could be staged quickly after other larger and more complicated scenes. I miscalculated. I recognized that I did not spend enough time with the actor making sure he understood the comedy and mechanics of the scene, forcing me to quickly find time in the schedule to give the scene the time it needed. The actor and I worked on the comedic moments, adjusted the tempo of the scene, the physicality of the actor, discussed specificity and subtext, and cut a bit of the dialogue in hopes of improving the scene.

In their critique of the production, two of my professors described this particular scene as one of the few weak moments in the show that exposed the performance limitations of the actor playing Bobby. I explained all the methods I employed in an effort to rectify the scene and the reality that I simply ran out of time to dedicate to the scene as other issues arose during the rehearsal period. While understanding the limitations, one professor did not accept my excuses. She encouraged me to always find a solution. If an actor is creating a problem, the truth is they may not be equipped to solve the problem themselves. As the director, it is my ultimate responsibility to find a solution, be the problem-solver. Since I was not getting the desired comedic effect from the actor playing Bobby, she encouraged me to create the comedic sensibility through other means, like the ensemble who was also present in the scene. I fixated on the actor playing Bobby to add humor to the scene instead of looking at every possibility. My professor's words reminded me there is always a solution to be found if I refuse to settle for "good enough" and examine every possibility.

In contrast to the comedic moments that fell flat, there were other comedic bits that felt too heavy handed. Ludwig's libretto calls for clear comedic punchlines and over the top characterization. I embraced this aesthetic early in the rehearsal process and as I mentioned in chapter four, worked with the cast so they developed a better understanding of the style of the piece. While I still believe this was the best course of action, there were some moments in which the cast pushed too hard for a joke, comedic bit, or punch-line. One example of a forced comedic moment in this production was the moment Bobby dumps Irene. I wanted to create a farcical moment between the two actors in which they kept circling one another and opening and closing the hotel room doors. While I do

believe the moment lends itself to physical comedy, I attempted to pack too many comedic bits into such a short scene, making it laborious rather than comic. There is a fine line between embracing the style and forcing a joke. The latter does not flow naturally from the action of the scene and is off-putting to an audience, while the former feels earnest because it works within the framework of the production. Knowing the difference can be difficult, but the discernment to know the difference is a skill I need to cultivate. As the director, I need to trust my audience to get the joke without spoon feeding it to them.

Blocking

In reflecting on my work on this production and listening to the feedback of faculty members, I recognize my blocking was not as active or dynamic as it could have been. Most of the scenes happened on the farthest downstage plane. I wanted to ensure the energy the cast was exuding to reach beyond the orchestra pit, so I moved the majority of small scenes of dialogue as far downstage as possible. This decision led to flat stage pictures with cast members repeatedly at the lip of the stage. I chose to prioritize energy over a desire for varied blocking, instead of searching for a way to combine both attributes.

The large scenes involving the cowboys, Zangler girls, and principal characters represented a different struggle. The amount of bodies on stage almost guaranteed their energy would reach the back of the house, but I needed to find places to put the cast. This problem was noticeable in Lank's saloon and the scenes set on the street of Deadrock. I used every available level in an effort to avoid one large mob on the stage floor. Actors played scenes on balconies, stairs, and roofs. The issue became actors on the stage floor.

They remained close to the scenery instead of venturing out into the open space downstage of the set, but I was happy to have the actors spaced so each performer was visible to the audience. I stopped at this minimal level instead of striving for active and meaningful blocking.

I realize now the size of the production was also a factor in the stagnant blocking of the production. The groundwork for this shortcoming was laid when the ground plans were created. The ground plans were largely determined by practicality rather than a conceptual approach. The configuration of the scenic units was designed to provide ample room for choreography and allow for swift scenic shifts. I worked quickly to get the blocking established so it could be refined throughout the rehearsal process.

Choreography, however, became more time consuming than I anticipated and I forfeited some of my time so the choreographer could clean dances. Time was of the essence and efficiency was prioritized over artistry in the specific area of blocking. I should have continued to find ways to make interesting pictures that visually represented the conflicts, themes, and ideas of the script, rather than settle for good enough.

Looking back on *Crazy for You*, I see how the constraints of the scale of the show and limited amount of time to accomplish such an ambitious production affected my direction in ways I did not notice in the moment. I settled for acceptable in several areas instead of pushing myself and my cast to the standard of excellence I envisioned. There were a multitude of ways to problem-solve and overcome challenges if I was willing to look past the easiest or most obvious solution. I will carry the lessons I learned during the production with me in the future. Good enough will never be good enough again.

Conclusion

As a first-year graduate student, the idea of my thesis production seemed like a distant dream. I watched the third-year graduate directors mount their productions in awe and disbelief in the idea that one day I would be directing my thesis show. I perpetually thought about what type of production I wanted to direct. I thought through a variety of titles, directorial concepts, and artistic visions I could implore in my thesis production. I wanted my thesis to feel like a seminal production for me. My graduate program director, however, provided a different perspective about the thesis production. He encouraged me to view it as just another production. He provided the realistic notion that my thesis production would not and should not be the best production I ever direct. The thesis is designed to allow graduate directors a chance to apply the skills they have learned in the graduate directing program in a practical way that can be displayed to potential employers. While this perspective was initially upsetting, in the end it allowed me the freedom to enjoy the directing process without unnecessary pressure.

During the second year of my graduate studies, my thesis proposal was approved and I began preparing to direct *Crazy for You*. I was grateful for the rare opportunity to direct a musical for my thesis production. I have a strong passion and admiration for musical theatre, but I struggled with wondering if others would deem *Crazy for You* artistic enough for a thesis production. I wondered if I should try to make the production vastly different from the original by deconstructing the piece, reframing the musical, or attempting to elevate the show to high art. I came to my senses and forced myself to remember the words of my graduate program advisor.

I was proud to direct *Crazy for You* and decided to embrace the show's sense of escapism. One of the biggest lessons I learned through my time in the graduate directing program at Baylor University is to trust myself. I cannot control how others will perceive my work, so there is no sense in worrying about their reactions. I stopped allowing the value judgements of others dictate how I approach a production. *Crazy for You* is light frivolity, but that does not make it bad or less valuable. I decided to embrace the show for what it was, so I would not fight against the material the entire production.

I will forever treasure my experience directing this production. I grew as a director and as an artist. Around the time of the production, hurricanes ravished Houston and Puerto Rico, rallies of racial hatred were staged in Charlottesville, North Carolina, and the nation seemed more politically divided than it had been in recent years. I recognized that this "old-fashioned" musical could provide light, laughter, and joy for a few hours to people struggling with fear, pain, and anxiety. *Crazy for You* is a "feel good" show that celebrates musical theatre and the power of art to unite and revitalize a community. For two and half hours an audience is invited to escape the worries of their lives. Some may view "escapist" theatre as fluff, but I see it as a necessity. In the midst of chaos and tragedy, it is our privilege as artists to provide audiences with joy and laughter. Who could ask for anything more?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research and Design Images



Figure A.1: Paper model for *Crazy for You* used to experiment with the arrangement of buildings for the street of Deadrock.

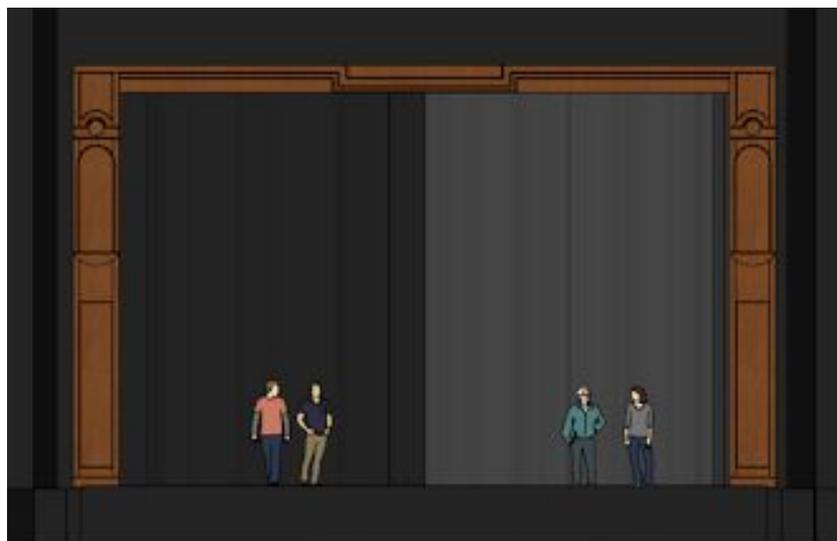


Figure A.2: Digital rendering for the design of the interior of the Zangler Theater.



Figure A.3: Digital rendering for the design of the exterior of the Zangler Theater.



Figure A.4: Placement of exterior building facades for the street of Deadrock in scale model.



Figure A.5: Exterior of Lank's saloon in scale model.



Figure A.6: Interior of Lank's saloon in scale model.

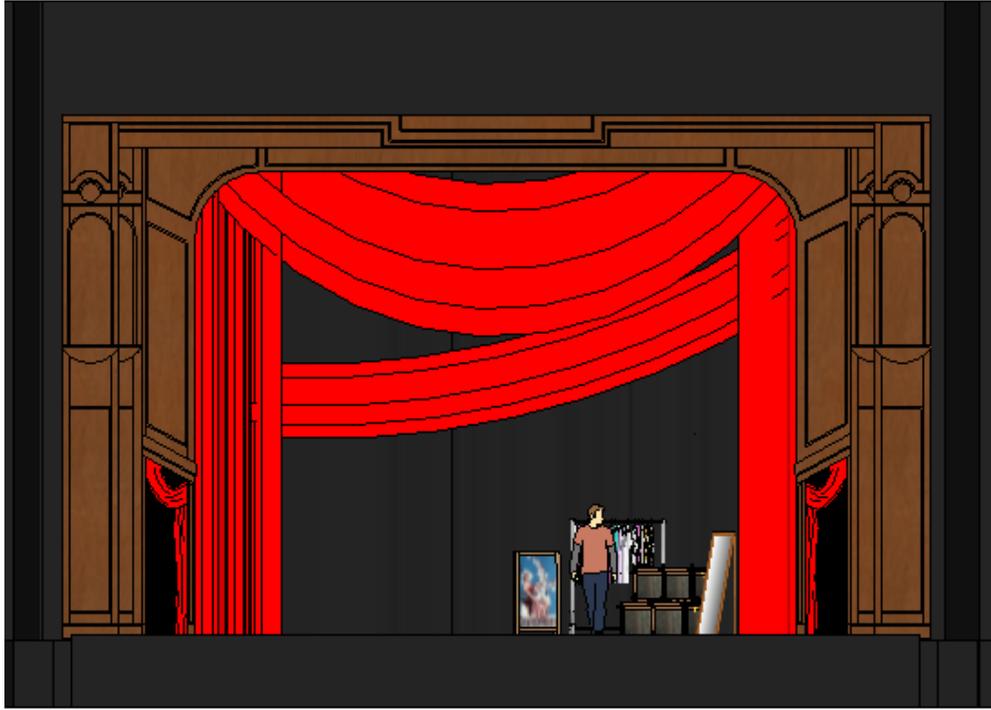


Figure A.7: Digital rendering of the interior of the Gaiety Theater before its restoration.

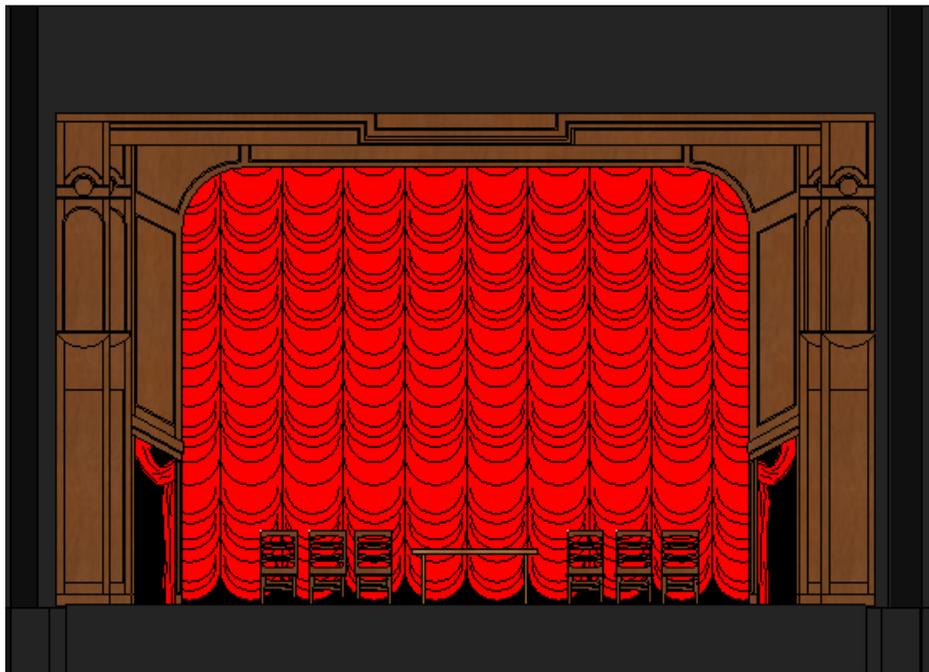


Figure A.8: Digital rendering of the interior of the Gaiety Theater after its restoration.

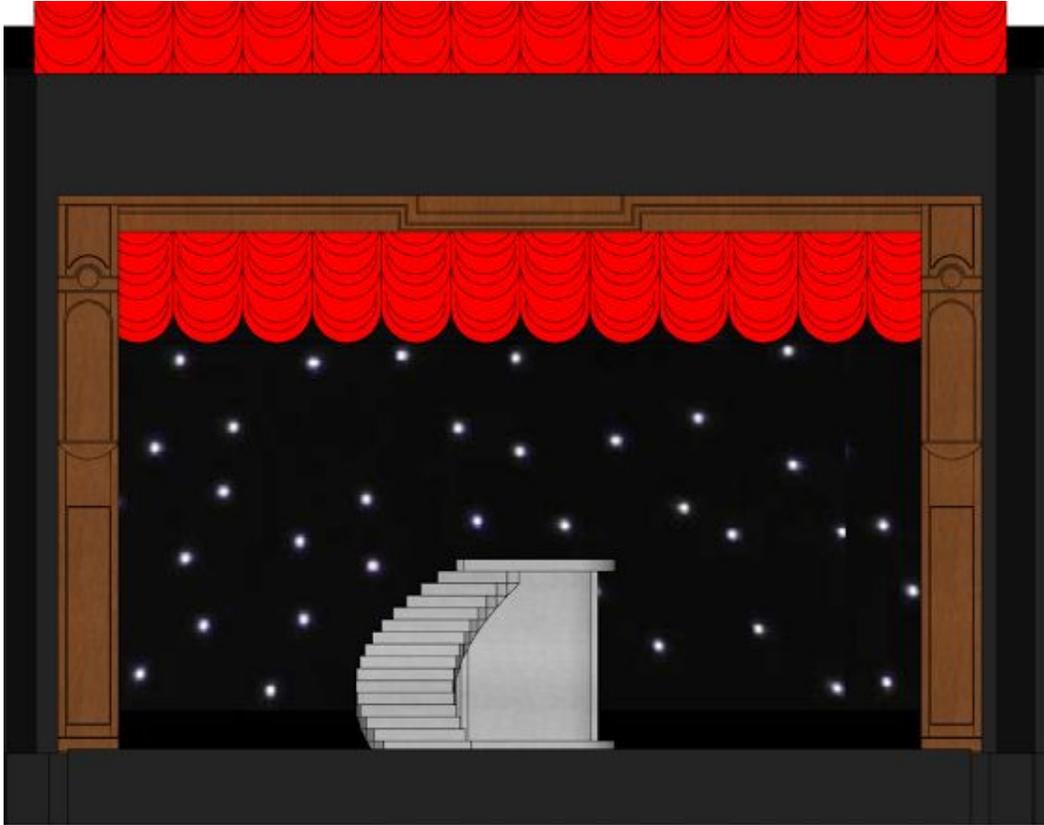


Figure A.9: Digital rendering of the grand staircase and star curtain for the “Finale.”



Figure A.10: Scale model of the lobby of the Gaiety Theater.



Figure A.11: Images of costume research and inspiration for the costume designer and director.



Figure A.12: Costume renderings for the New York Characters: Bobby, Irene, Lottie, and the New York Ensemble.

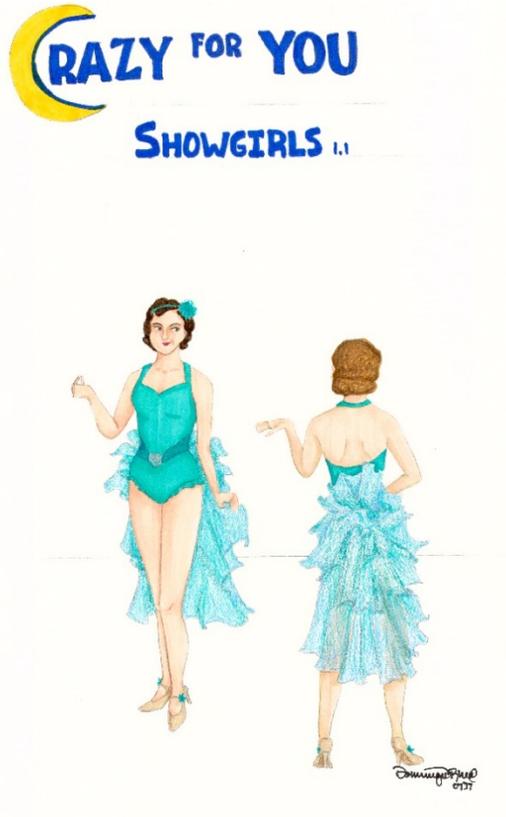


Figure A.13: Costume renderings for the Zangler girls as they close *Zangler's Follies*.



Figure A.14: Costume renderings for the Zangler girls' "Girls Enter Nevada."



Figure A.15: Costume renderings for the Zangler girls' rehearsal looks for "Slap that Bass."

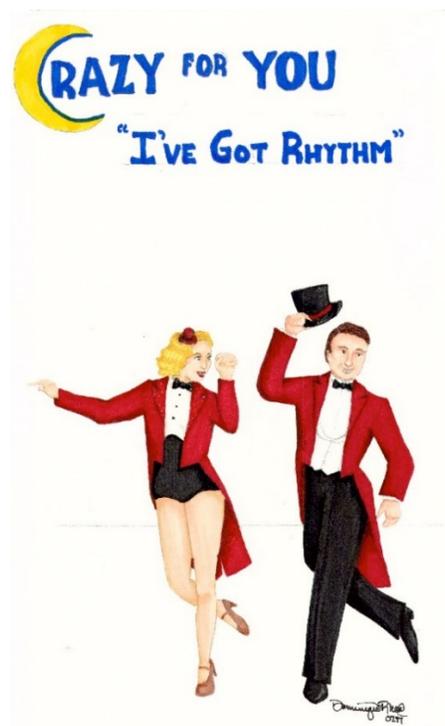


Figure A.16: Costume rendering for "I Got Rhythm."

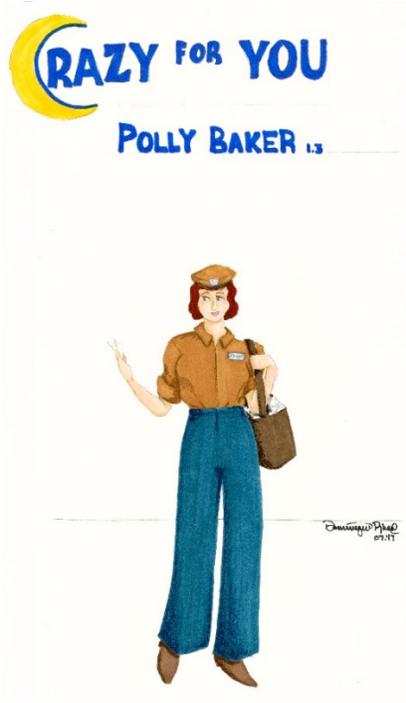


Figure A.17: Costume rendering of Polly's mail carrier uniform.

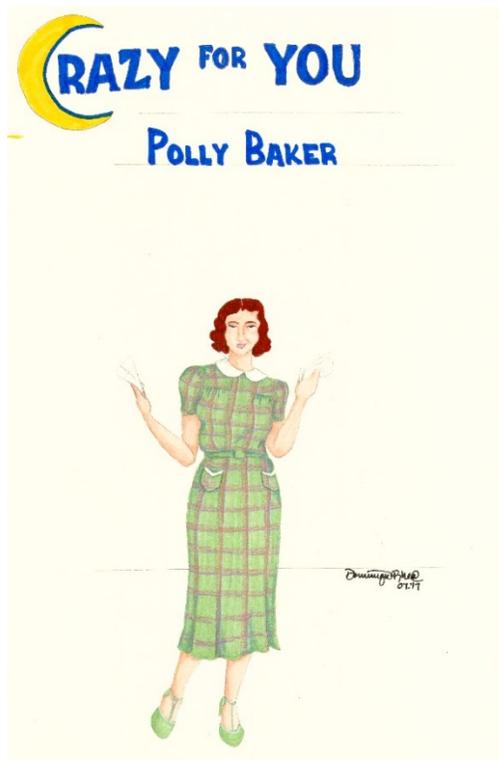


Figure A.18: Costume rendering of Polly's day dress.

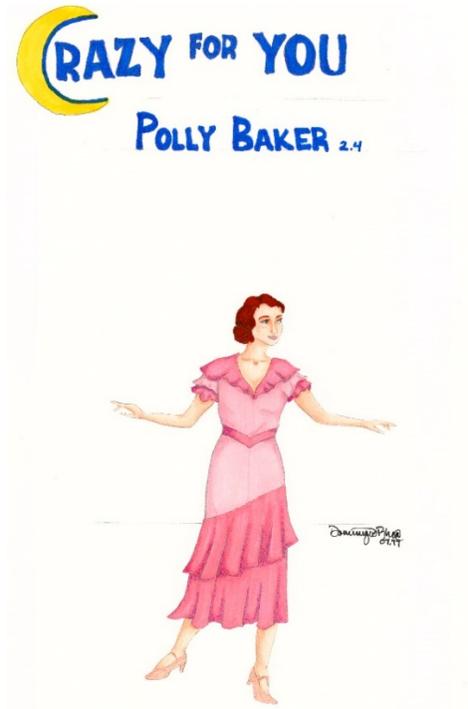


Figure A.19: Costume rendering of Polly’s pink dress for “Nice Work If You Can Get it.”

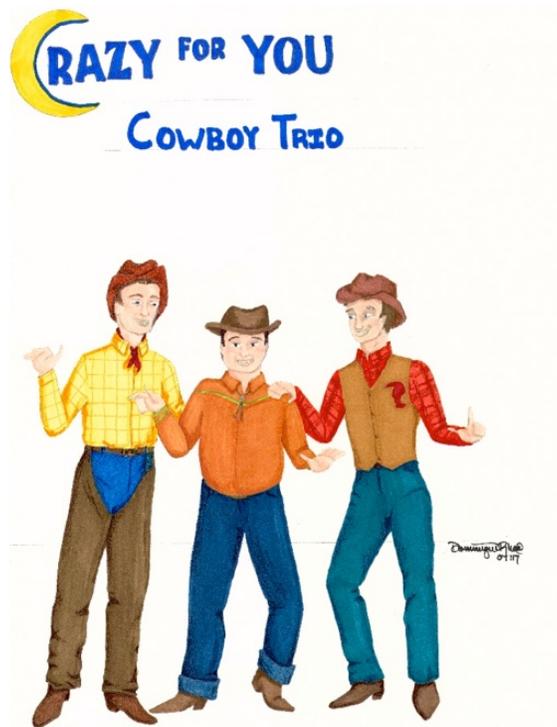


Figure A.20: Costume renderings for the Cowboy Trio of Deadrock, Nevada.

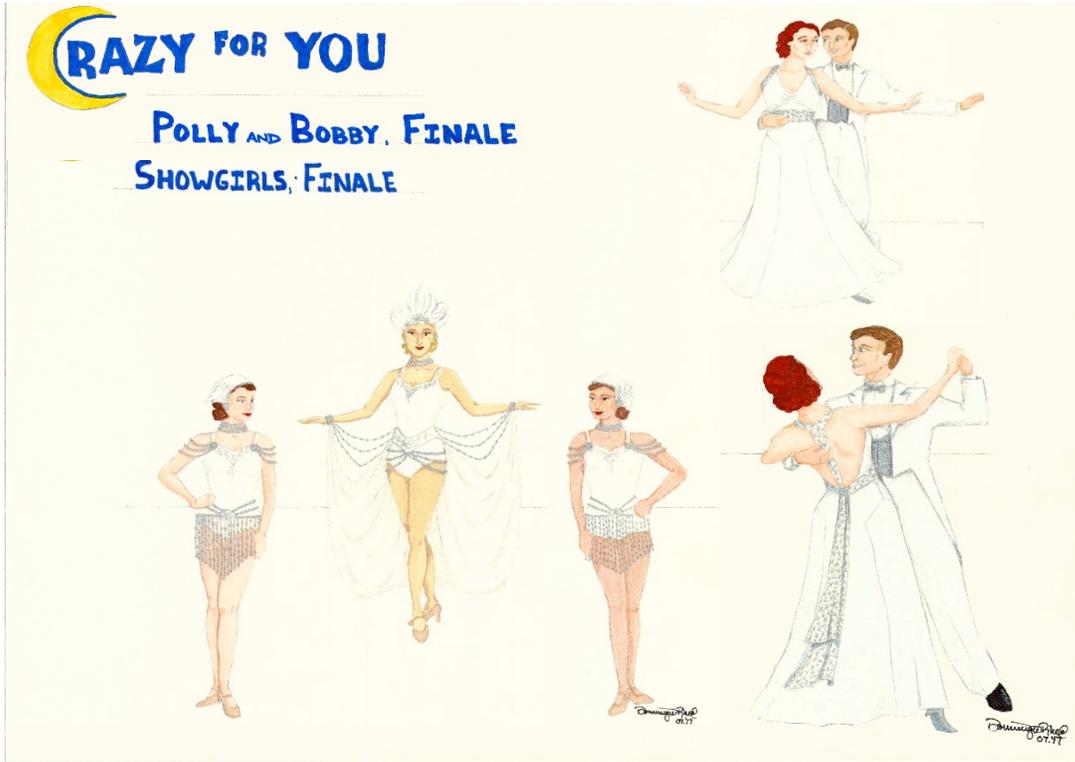


Figure A.21: Costume renderings for the Silver Zangler girls, Bobby, and Polly during the “Finale.”

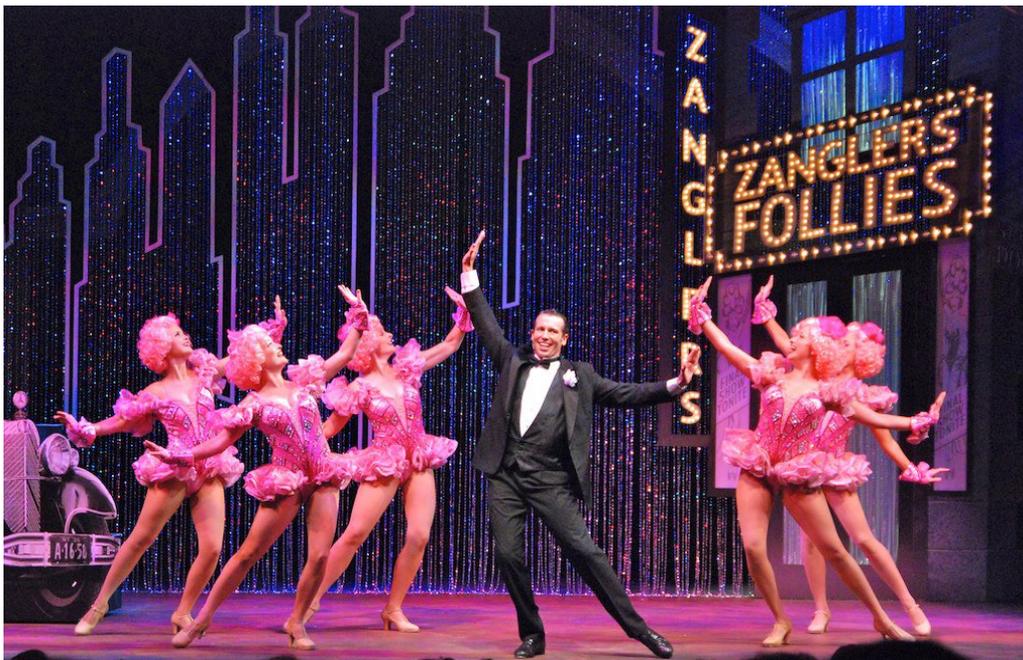


Figure A.22: Inspiration for the Pink Zangler girls’ costumes for “Can’t Be Bothered Now.”

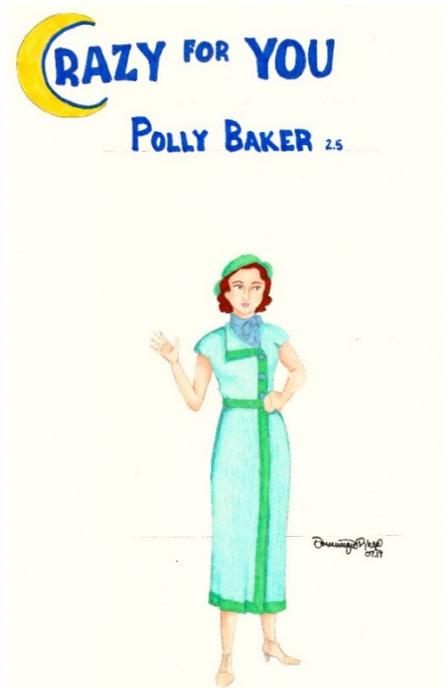


Figure A.23: Costume rendering of Polly's travel dress that transforms into her white finale dress.



Figure A.24: The Zangler Theater marquee being constructed.



Figure A.25: The star curtain being constructed in the Jones Theater.



Figure A.26: A sound technician securing a microphone into the wig of the actress playing Irene.



Figure A.27: Inspiration for the passerelle in the early stages of the scenic design process.



Figure A.28: Research image of a properties rental for Lottie's car with a working elevator.



Figure A.29: Research image of a 1924 Alfa Romeo the properties designer used when constructing Lottie's car for the Baylor production of *Crazy for You*.



Figure A.30: The beginning stages of the construction of Lottie's car.



Figure A.31: Image of the prop tumbleweed used during “Bidin’ My Time.”

Crazy for You
Choreo/Staging Breakdown

Choreographer’s Responsibility	Director’s Responsibility
1. K-ra-zy For You	1. Overture
2. I Can’t Be Bothered Now (Thursday Boot Camp)	2. Bidin’ My Time
3. Shall We Dance	3. Things Are Looking Up
4. Girls Enter Nevada	4. Could You Use Me
5. Slap that Bass (Friday Boot Camp)	5. Someone to Watch Over Me
6. I Got Rhythm (Saturday Boot Camp)	6. Embraceable You
7. What Causes That-2 nd Half of Song (Friday Boot Camp)	7. The Real American Folk Song
8. Naughty Baby	8. They Can’t Take That Away From Me
9. Stiff Upper Lip (Sunday Boot Camp)	9. But Not for Me
10. New Promenade	10. Bidin’ My Time Reprise
11. Nice Work if You Can Get It	11. Things Are Looking Up
12. Finale	
13. Curtain Call (Friday Boot Camp)	

Figure A.32: The chart used by the director and choreographer to clearly divide their responsibilities.

Song	Broadway	West End	Notes/Cuts
Act 1			
Overture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast Lush Driving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the embraceable you section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curtain goes up on the Girls enter Nevada
K-ra-zy For You		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs to feel as if Bobby is in control of this number
I Can't Be Bothered Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pronounced Flute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faster than the NY version 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will have fewer "Hi, Bobby" Like a hair bit slower than London's version
Biddin' My Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the character voices, unrefined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sounds to pretty from the beginning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is train whistle from orchestra? Can go a little slower than the NYC version Pause for tumbleweed joke Like the vocal slides, sloppy nature
Things Are Looking Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love the triangle, chime Like the accel at the end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	
Could You Use Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bobby to have freedom in the opening section Who moos? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polly has to sound gruffer and less refined 	
Shall We Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love the drop to piano for Shall we Dance Cut 2:20-2:56 maybe Bum, ba bump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miss the flirting section at the beginning of the dance break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun and flirty Cut in the middle? Kiss sound London ending tag
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the sound of the build around 2:20 Love the kiss sound Love the end 	
Girls Enter Nevada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charactery from the girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better diction from girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix the two
Someone to Watch Over Me		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the freedom in the pre-verse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want the Laura Osnes version of this Treat these classic songs as new songs Let motivation cause the music shifts and pacing Like the taking time at the end and holding the last note
Slap that Bass		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faster Seems cleaner/smoothen than the NYC Loses energy in the final tag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'd like to start at the NYC and get to the London tempo as the characters become more confident
Embraceable You		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the faster tempo when we get to actual song 	
I Got Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut around 3:20 bottle bit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start back around 3? 3:40 not heard in NYC Production Sounds more embellished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'd like a longer stomp section after the singing Look at score for possible cuts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mm.127-143 Mm. 207-226

Figure A.33.1: This chart documents my thoughts for the music directors after listening to act one of the Broadway and London cast recordings.

Act 2			
Real American Folk Song	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charactery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make ooh section meaningful
What Causes That?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free in pre-verse • Ad libs don't all fit in time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even more conversational • Both in similar Bela voice • Faster • Tighter precision • Love the big splat • Extra twinkle • Different tag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean adlib timing • Cut some of dance section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mm. 111-117 • Strong precision • Bela voice work • Can we do the London tag
Naughty Baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy vibrato and chest resonance • Need room for text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like the Spanish intro • Like the playfulness in intro • Like the clapping • London to crazy to London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K. Chen singing this song • Playfulness at opening • Spanish intro and clapping? • Sweet to crazy to Sweet
Stiff Upper Lip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut some of table section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eases into it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like easing into it • Cut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mm. 263-288
They Can't Take That Away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sings it too much at times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too slow • Like going up at ending in vocal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it sensual and meaningful
But Not For Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut intro and pre-verse • Like her ending of "marriage knot" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance by herself
But Not for Me (Reprise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love the big finish in the orchestra 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start reprise slow and a cappella
New York interlude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are whistles live or in orchestra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love the brassy switch 	
Nice Work If You Can Get It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need the beginning hits • Cut some of dance break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut one of the nice works at the end <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mm. 135-143 ◦ Maybe more • Cut some of dance break • Polly enters on "If you Try"
Bidin My Time (Reprise)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More character • Like the spoons 	
Things Are Looking Up (Reprise)			
Finale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More music and vocals 	
Curtain Call			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure out entrances
Exit Music			

Figure A.33.2: This chart documents my thoughts for the music directors after listening to act two of the Broadway and London cast recordings.

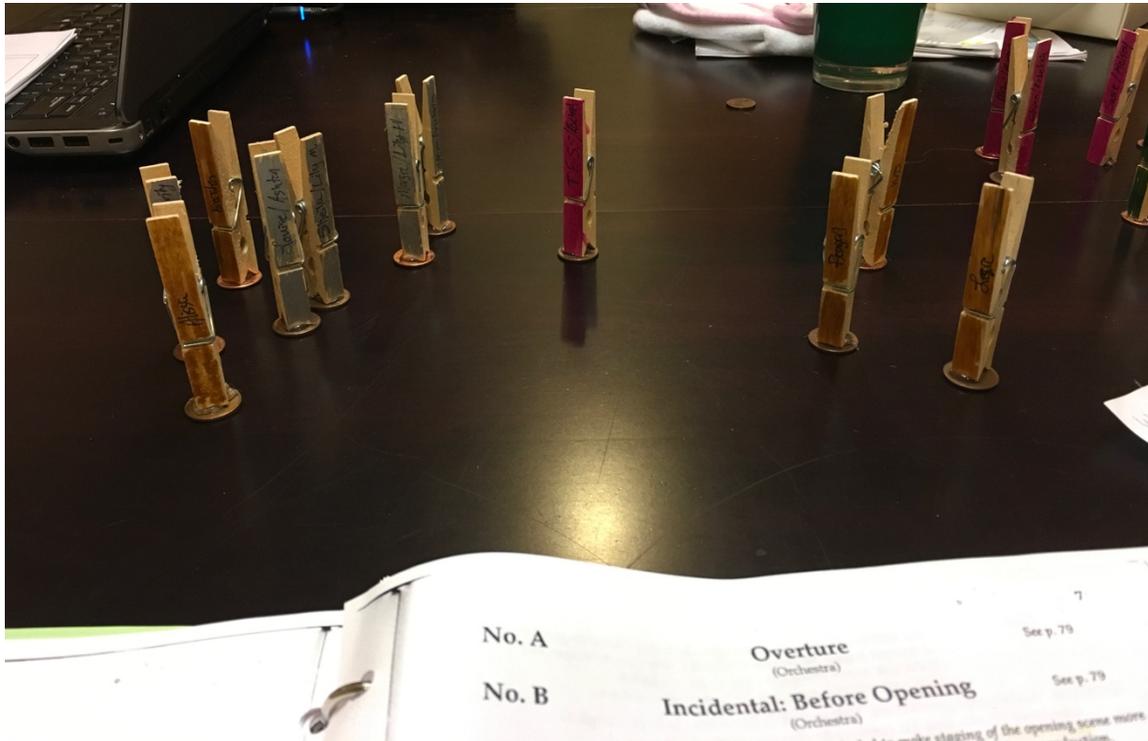


Figure A.34: Image of the director using clothespins as avatars to aid in blocking.


Crazy For You
Weekly Schedule

Boot Camp Week

Thursday, August 17			
9:00am–noon	<i>Music:</i> Men	Seasons Studio	All Men in Cast <i>except Bobby</i>
9:00am–noon	<i>Choreo:</i> Can't Be Bothered Now	Movement Studio	Bobby and Pink Zangler Girls Chris, Rachel, Evie, Rebekah, Paige, Kelsey, Morgan
1:00–5:00pm	<i>Music:</i> Group Songs & Follies	Jones	All Cast
5:30–10:00pm	<i>Blocking:</i> Act I	Jones	All Cast [Food will be provided due to short break and long rehearsal]
Friday, August 18			
9:00am–noon	<i>Choreo:</i> Slap That Bass	Movement Studio	Bobby, Polly, All Zangler Girls, Cowboys
1:00–2:00pm	<i>Work:</i> What Causes That	Movement Studio	Bobby, Bela
2:00–3:30pm	Solo Work	TBA	TBA
8:00–10:00pm	<i>Choreo:</i> Bows	Jones	All Cast
Saturday, August 19			
9:00am–noon	<i>Work:</i> I Got Rhythm	Jones	Bobby, Polly, Everett, All Zangler Girls, Cowboys
1:00–5:00pm	<i>Work:</i> I Got Rhythm	Jones	Bobby, Polly, Everett, All Zangler Girls, Cowboys
6:00–10:00pm	<i>Work:</i> I Got Rhythm	Jones	Bobby, Polly, Everett, All Zangler Girls, Cowboys
Sunday, August 20			
1:00–5:00pm	<i>Choreo:</i> Stiff Upper Lip	Jones	Bobby, Polly, Eugene, Patricia, Everett, All Zangler Girls, Cowboys

Figure A.35: Image of the rehearsal schedule for the week of boot camp.

APPENDIX B

Selected Production Photos



Figure B.1: The Zangler girls waiting for their entrance.



Figure B.2: The Zangler girls taking instruction from Tess for their final entrance.



Figure B.3: Irene telling Bobby about their wedding plans.



Figure B.4: The NY ensemble asking Zangler questions.



B.5: Lottie arrives in her car outside the Zangler Theater.



Figure B.6: Bobby singing “Can’t Be Bothered Now” as Irene and Mother argue.



Figure B.7: Bobby dancing on top of Lottie’s car.



Figure B.8: A Zangler girl popping out of the hood of the car.



Figure B.9: Bobby's fantasy of dancing with a Zangler girl.



Figure B.10: Bobby tap-dancing with the Zangler girls.



Figure B.11: "He can't be bothered now!"



Figure B.12: Transition from New York City to Deadrock, Nevada.



Figure B.13: "Bidin' My Time"



Figure B.14: Polly delivering the mail.



Figure B.15: “Put on your dancing shoes.”



Figure B.16: The stars descend as Bobby and Polly dance in the desert.



Figure B.17: "Shall We Dance."



Figure B.18: Transition from "Shall We Dance" to act one, scene six (Gaiety Theater).



Figure B.19: “And this theater, just imagine, giving it a whole new life!”



Figure B.20: Silhouette of the Zangler girls for “Girls Enter Nevada.”



Figure B.21: Choreography for “Girls Enter Nevada.”



Figure B.22: Final pose of “Girls Enter Nevada.”



Figure B.23: The Zangler girls in their chorus line to show off their costume pairings.



Figure B.24: "Someone to Watch Over Me."



Figure B.25: Patsy and Tess teaching the men choreography for the show.



B.26: "And the milk and honey'll flow!"



Figure B.27: Tess and Patsy riding the cart for “Slap that Bass.”



Figure B.28: Choreography for “Slap that Bass.”



Figure B.29: The Fodors arrive in Deadrock, Nevada.



B.30: The “Spiderman” section of choreography in “I Got Rhythm.”



Figure B.31: Choreography for “I Got Rhythm.”



Figure B.32: The arrival of Zangler and the final pose of “I Got Rhythm.”



Figure B.33: “The Real American Folk Song.”



Figure B.34: “Don’t ever kiss this neck again.”



Figure B.35: “The Dalton Boys meet the Clayton Gang!”



Figure B.36: “What Causes That?”



Figure B.37: “Naughty Baby.”



Figure B.38: “Stiff Upper Lip.”



B.39: "They Can't Take That Away From Me."



Figure B.40: Bobby's return to New York City.



B.41: "The man who lives for only making money."



Figure B.42: “Nice Work If You Can Get It.”



B.43: Polly dancing with Bobby during “Nice Work If You Can Get It.”



Figure B.44: The “Finale.”

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