SONGS OF THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES

DISSSERTATION

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by

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Enormously popular in their own time, the Ziegfeld Follies have become an icon of American popular culture. Produced annually by Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. between 1907 and 1931, these revues were and still are best-known for their lavish production numbers which brought unprecedented attention to members of the chorus. They have served as inspiration for generations of filmmakers, playwrights, and popular authors, but have only been studied by a small number of scholars, primarily those working in cultural studies. For the first time, this dissertation brings a musicological identity to the Follies by examining their songs. It addresses the legends surrounding certain songs so that their performance history can be better understood. It discusses representations of gender, race, and national identity in songs of the Follies, revealing the cultural beliefs Ziegfeld thought would be most acceptable to his largely white, middle-class audiences. It dissects comic song performances to show a specifically musical component to the humor of the Follies. Finally, it analyzes compositional techniques in the lyrics of Gene Buck and in the songs written by Irving Berlin for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1927*, the only Follies production to have been written by a single songwriter.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Ziegfeld Follies

Between 1907 and 1931, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. produced a series of spectacular Broadway revues known collectively as the Ziegfeld Follies. Beyond the popularity they enjoyed in their own time and the long list of stars that appeared in them, the Ziegfeld Follies have had a tremendous influence on the history of American musical theatre in the twentieth century. The elaborate production style of the Follies has influenced musical productions which followed, from the films of Busby Berkeley in the 1930s and 1940s to the Disney productions currently on Broadway. Moreover, the significant role of the ensemble in the Follies has also been modeled in productions of diverse styles and periods, from Oklahoma! to A Chorus Line.

Despite their popularity and historical significance, however, the Follies have failed to garner much attention in scholarly histories of American musical theatre. In most instances, the Follies are mentioned only briefly as part of an evolutionary pool including minstrelsy, vaudeville, circus, operetta, and other forms of musical theatre popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from which the plot-driven musical developed. The tendency for history to be viewed in an evolutionary manner is
not exclusive to the field of musical theatre studies, but the lack of attention given in this field to early works points to a specific methodological issue. Methodologies used to examine musical theatre depend upon the correlation of music with a plot, something which the Follies – and many other examples of musical theatre from the early twentieth century – did not possess. Instead, the Follies consisted of songs, dances, and sketches loosely strung together by topical themes.

As several scholars have argued, the American vernacular music common to the Broadway musical distinguishes it from opera. Nevertheless, the integration of music and drama in the form makes an operatic methodology readily applicable. Joseph Swain’s *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* is the clearest example of this; it is founded on an integrative approach to musical theatre defined by Joseph Kerman and ultimately derived from Richard Wagner.¹ Scott McMillin has recently attempted to depart from integration as a model for musical theatre. In *The Musical as Drama*, McMillin argues that it is primarily the disjunction between music and drama in the American musical that makes it so interesting. In short, he follows a Brechtian model of music theatre rather than a Wagnerian one.² McMillin’s study does not, however,

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² McMillan cites John Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1964), 84-90 as a particularly salient example of what Brecht valued in the combination of music and drama. For example, Brecht suggests that “the most striking innovation” of
focus on the revue formats of the early twentieth century which embody this aesthetic of
disjunction to the fullest extent. His efforts have therefore resulted in a study which
provides a more nuanced understanding of book musicals dating from the 1940s onward
but which does not illuminate the history of American musical theatre prior to that point.
Ultimately, he still relies on the dramatic characteristics of these later musical works as
criteria for approaching musical theatre.

These plot-based approaches to musical theatre are valuable. They offer insight
into the role of music in individual productions and suggest trends in musical and
dramatic construction at different points in the history of American musical theatre. The
problem, as Margaret Knapp has rightfully argued, is that a theory of musical theatre
history which privileges integrated works neglects “a good deal of the real history of the
musical theatre.”

Knapp made this argument almost thirty years ago, yet scholarship on
American musical theatre history is still focused primarily on the musical. Julian Mates’s
*America’s Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre* remains one of the
few histories of American musical theatre which overviews the genre in virtually all of its
forms: opera, operetta, minstrelsy, circus, melodrama, dance, burlesque, revue,
vaudeville, and musical comedy.

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*The Threepenny Opera* was its “strict separation of the music from all the other elements
of entertainment offered.”

3 Margaret Knapp, “Integration of Elements as a Viable Standard for Judging Musical
Theatre,” in *Focus on Popular Theatre in America*, edited by Henry F. Salerno (Bowling
Because Broadway and the popular song industry were so closely linked in the early twentieth century, one might suppose that popular music studies, with their frequent emphasis on the individual song, could provide an appropriate methodology for revues such as the Follies. A few individual songs from the Follies have made their way into prominent popular song histories such as Alec Wilder’s *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950* and Charles Hamm’s *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America*.4 These songs are exceptional in the history of the Follies, however. Many songs of the Follies were enormously popular but only for a short time. In most cases, the brief lifespan of the songs is attributable to their style and content. The sentimental songs used in the early Follies productions were largely out of fashion by the 1920s, and the many topical songs which were essential to the Ziegfeld revues lost their significance very soon after they premiered. Parody songs based on other Broadway productions and musical spoofs on everything from President Roosevelt to Prohibition were out of date within a very short time of their inclusion in the Follies.

In sum, studies of American musical theatre and American popular song have situated the Ziegfeld Follies at the perimeter of these fields. This dissertation seeks to resituate them in the place they deserve within these fields and within the broader realm of scholarship as a whole. Certain analytical techniques used by music scholars, such as traditional musical analysis and the interpretation of performance techniques, are still

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appropriate for the songs presented in the Follies. These techniques, extracted from a methodology reliant upon either musico-dramatic correlation or enduring popular appeal play a significant role in this study.

Cultural studies also contribute to this research, for this field has thus far produced the most enlightening scholarship on Broadway revues of the early twentieth century. Prominent examples featuring research on the Follies include Lewis Erenberg’s *Steppin’ Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, Linda Mizejewski’s *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema*, and Angela Latham’s *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s*. Such studies are facilitated by a methodology not dependent upon either the structure or the longevity of a work. Instead, these scholars examine the social significance of these entertainments, including their representations of gender and race, their incorporation of social trends outside the theatre, and their relationship to political and cultural life at the time. This methodology is particularly appropriate given the topical nature of the Follies. It illuminates the social aspects of these revues, whether explicitly performed or implicitly suggested. For this reason, the study here presented incorporates culturally-based methodology into a discussion of theatrical and musical issues.

It is songs which serve as the foundation of this study, for they were fundamental to the Follies. They showcased the vocal talents of singers like Nora Bayes, Bernard Granville, John Steel, and Ruth Etting. They were vehicles for social and political commentary, touching on everything from the nightlife at Rector’s to World War I. They
were the rhythmic underpinning of dance features and production numbers for the most famous Follies girls. They served as comedy routines for Fanny Brice, Bert Williams, Eddie Cantor, and others.

Songs constitute much of the substance of the Follies that remains; most sketch routines were not written down and therefore have not been preserved. Of course, the preservation of songs of the Follies in written or recorded form does not reveal the multifaceted identity of song itself. No single medium can preserved a song in a manner that incorporates all of its facets. Printed music involves notes, rhythms, and lyrics with exceptional precision; in many cases, however, it does not fully capture what was in the mind of the songwriter and is extremely limited in its ability to demonstrate elements of musical performance. A recording involves some aspects of musical performance such as vocal technique and expression; while more indicative of a given singer’s style, however, recordings are further removed from the songwriter and/or lyricist. Even in a live song performance, the fundamental identity of the song remains elusive. Is it the tune in the mind of the composer, the words written down by the lyricist, the harmonies orchestrated by the arranger, the interpretation of the singer, or something else entirely?

The study which follows is predicated on the multifaceted identity of the song. It is considered as music and lyrics, composition and performance, spectacle and sound. Ideally, each song would be considered according to all of these criteria and would be represented in all of its facets. Unfortunately, however, extant source materials, or rather the lack of extant source materials, make this impossible. Many songs of the Follies exist as printed music, but far from all. A fair number are discussed in theatrical reviews, but
some were only listed in a program as having been performed in the Follies. Few were recorded, and even fewer were captured on film. The organization of this study and the issues addressed therein are therefore based to some extent on the source materials available. Adequate knowledge about the creation, content, publication, performance, and reception of various songs in the Follies has served as the primary determining factor in what I have chosen to discuss.

Not all songs performed in the Follies receive mention in this study. This is true not only because the source materials on some songs are limited, but also because it is impossible even to generate a comprehensive and conclusive list of all songs performed in the Follies. Songs, dances, and sketches were frequently changed. As a result, there is no such thing as a definitive version of any of the Follies productions. One can only piece together a representative version of each annual Follies production, a version which is necessarily based on those source materials which survive.

There is yet another problematic issue pertaining to the Follies as an object of scholarly study which needs to be addressed. The status of the Follies in American popular culture since the early twentieth century has led to numerous legendary representations of the Ziegfeld revues. The best-known of these are films produced by MGM in the 1930s and 1940s such as The Great Ziegfeld and Ziegfeld Girl. Writings on the Follies, however, suggest a similarly nostalgic flavor in their representations. Marjorie Farnsworth’s The Ziegfeld Follies describes the lives of the best-known Follies personalities with the style of a writer for People Magazine. Robert Baral’s Revue features a chapter on the Follies organized according to each annual production, but it
rivals Farnsworth’s book in its awe of the Follies and similarly lacks documentation for the information it provides. Even Gerald Bordman, in *American Musical Revue* (1985), begins his chapter on the Follies with the exclamation, “Ziegfeld! The name still has a magic to it!”

Such legend-based representations of the Follies are a natural reflection of their status in American popular culture. When identified as nostalgic or celebratory, these representations can be appreciated for the insight they offer into popular perception of the Follies at the time they were produced. They are not, however, adequate representations of the true history of the Follies. In order to examine the history of the Follies, with respect to song or anything else, one must begin by situating these legends in their proper place within our conceptualization.

As such, this study begins with a chapter devoted to understanding and reframing the legends which have come to dominate popular understanding of the Follies. Chapter Two traces the performance history of three of the most enduringly popular songs from the Follies – ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon,’ ‘My Man,’ and ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ – from their premieres in the Follies to their inclusion in MGM’s *The Great Ziegfeld* in 1936. Recreated performances of these songs in the years since they premiered have reshaped public perception of how they were initially performed and received in the context of the Follies. The acceptance of these legends reveals a twentieth-century American public who prefers to see the Follies in the mystical manner Ziegfeld intended.

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Chapter Three considers songs about women performed in various Follies productions, specifically those which caricature women according to the stereotypes associated with the chorus girl and the suffragette. These songs reveal changes in the perception of what it meant to be feminine during the first two decades of the twentieth century. They demonstrate a more nuanced view of femininity – one which simultaneously embraces the traditional and the modern – than is often associated with the Ziegfeld Follies.

Chapter Four discusses songs about the popularity of social dancing during the teens and twenties. Many of the social dances popular with white New Yorkers during the teens and twenties were derived from African-American styles of movement. Significantly, songs dating from the early 1910s suggest different methods of appropriation on the part of European-Americans than do those dating from the late 1910s and 1920s. The Texas Tommy, whose popularity peaked circa 1911, was characterized in the Follies in a manner substantially different from descriptions of the original black version. Alternatively, the shimmy, whose popularity peaked circa 1919, was depicted in song lyrics in a manner largely similar to accounts of black versions of the dance. Moreover, songs about the shimmy often referred to African-American culture in some way. Though racial stereotyping was still readily apparent in the latter method of appropriation, the movements borrowed suggest a broader acceptance of African-American expression than was evident in the dance appropriations which took place a few years earlier.
Chapter Five concerns war songs performed in the 1917 and 1918 productions of the Follies. These songs demonstrate how Ziegfeld used patriotism to his advantage. At a time when the excess of the Follies might have seemed irreverent and impractical from a financial point of view, Ziegfeld incorporated elaborate displays of patriotism, thus justifying the continuation of the revues during wartime. Moreover, the songs of these productions suggest commonly-held beliefs about the United States during the war years, including the construction of the Civil War as a force that unified rather than divided the nation and the importance of women in supportive roles.

Chapter Six addresses musical components in the comic song performances of Fanny Brice, Bert Williams, and Eddie Cantor. Musical issues are not entirely responsible for the comic effect of these performances, but they play a significant role. They facilitate physicality and comic timing in the performances of these comedians. Each of these performers must have understood the special potential for comedy in musical form, for they sang comic songs every time they appeared in the Follies.

Chapter Seven discusses songs co-authored by Gene Buck, Ziegfeld’s co-producer, talent recruiter, and one of the most prolific lyricists for the Follies. His collaborations with a wide range of composers exemplify the abundance of both topical and sentimental songs in the Follies. Buck’s topical songs speak both generally and specifically, to the average New Yorker and to the regular Broadway theatergoer. His sentimental songs include some particularly elegant examples of musically-inspired lyric
writing. In the collective body of songs he produced for the Follies, Buck demonstrates remarkably flexibility as a collaborator, something which was required of a writer for the Follies.

Chapter Eight describes the music of the Ziegfeld Follies of 1927. This was the only production to feature a single comic headliner, Eddie Cantor, and a single songwriter, Irving Berlin. Though undeniably a revue, the greater degree of cohesion in the music of the 1927 production was seemingly an attempt on the part of Ziegfeld – and Berlin – to produce a revue more suited to the increasing vogue for book musicals. Ziegfeld was not ready to abandon the style and structure of his Follies, but the critical response to Berlin’s songs as well as their own structural similarities suggest that the musical content of this Follies production was more unified than any other.

Lastly, the appendix provides a chronological overview of songs performed in each production of the Follies based on extant source materials. As noted above, the transient nature of songs in the Follies makes a comprehensive list impossible, but this chronology highlights those songs mentioned in critical reviews, listed in theatrical programs, and/or published as Follies songs. It is an attempt to provide the reader with some basic information about the known musical contents of each production.
CHAPTER 2

LEGENDS

Legends of the Follies

Legends are famous. Fame is the component shared by all legends and, perhaps more importantly, the force which situates them on the fringe of reality. A legend is not a fantasy, but the fame of a legend generates an identity which combines what is real with what is not. A legendary person is on one level a real person. He or she is, however, perceived by the public in a manner that is rarely solely reflective of his or her own personal identity. The public identity of a legend involves a complex web of truth, exaggeration, fiction, and imagination.

The songs discussed in this chapter – ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon,’ ‘My Man,’ and ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ – are legends of the Follies. They are three of the best-known and most enduringly popular songs to have been performed in the Follies. The original performances of these songs in the Follies, however, did not establish them as legends. Subsequent performances of these songs – performances given by the original
singers outside the Follies, performances given by different singers inside the Follies, and performances given with the express intent to reproduce the original renditions – have made these songs into legends.

‘Shine on Harvest Moon’

_It was in this second edition that Ziegfeld had his first Follies hit. It was ‘Shine On Harvest Moon’ and Norah Bayes and Jack Norworth introduced it._

Robert Baral,
_Revue_

Nora Bayes received positive reviews for her song performances in the _Follies of 1908_. Her rendition of ‘You Will Have to Sing an Irish Song’ was described by one critic as “the song hit of the performance” and by another as “little less than a classic.”

One writer suggested that Bayes “had the audience with her almost from the start, but she captured the crowd completely when she sang ‘Since Mother Was a Girl.’” None of the reviews, however, mentions her performance of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon.’ None of the extant programs list the song either.

Given the nature of the Follies as a loosely structured revue, it is easy to imagine that ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ was introduced into the Follies at some point during its summer run, after the wave of reviews were published and during a period from which no known programs remain. Indeed, a program from the week beginning June 29, 1908

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8 _New York World_, June 16, 1908, clipping, MCNY archives.
9 Unidentified clipping, NYPL, Baral Papers, Box 18, Folder 19.
indicates that ‘Rosa-Rosetta’ was replaced by a song entitled ‘Nothing Ever Troubles Me.’ ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ could easily have been another substitution. Yet conclusive evidence as to when and how ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ made its way onto the Follies stage remains elusive.

*The New York Times* issued an announcement pertaining to the *Follies of 1908* on September 8, 1908 which read: “F. Ziegfeld Jr.’s musical revue, ‘The Follies of 1908,’ was presented downstairs in the New York Theatre for the first time last night, where it will be seen for four weeks. Nora Bayes gave a burlesque of the Salome dance.”

It is certainly plausible that Bayes was performing the song at this point in the run and the writer for *The Times* simply did not mention it. The fact that it was not mentioned, however, suggests that it was hardly a huge hit for Bayes or the Follies at this point in time.

Indeed, ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ was not mentioned in *The New York Times* in any context until several months after the *Follies of 1908* had concluded its run. An advertisement for the Aeolian Company in the May 30, 1909 issue describes the song as having been performed in the *Follies of 1908*, but the considerable time span between the end of the production and the appearance of this advertisement suggests that the song’s rise in popularity was not concurrent with or even an immediate result of its appearance in the show. *Variety* also fails to mention ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ during or shortly after the run of the *Follies of 1908*. It does, however, advertise another song written by Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth and published by Jerome H. Remick. The September 26,
1908 issue includes an advertisement from Remick for a “New Stirring March Song” entitled ‘When Jack Comes Sailing Home Again,’ written by Nora Bayes-Norworth and to be performed by Jack Norworth at Alhambra during the week of September 21, 1908. The precise reasons why Remick did not advertise the performance of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ in the Follies of 1908 in a similar manner can only be guessed; one possibility is that Remick, despite an existing professional relationship with Norworth and Bayes, only acquired the copyright for the song some time after its stage premiere. This possibility seems plausible given that ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ also fails to appear on a list of fourteen “Remarkable Hits” and “Pennant Winners” published by Remick in an advertisement from the October 17, 1908 issue, a list that does include ‘When Jack Comes Sailing Home Again.’ In any case, ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ was not advertised in Variety, with or without its association to the Follies, during or immediately following the run of the production, while at least one other song from the same songwriting and publishing team was being advertised both as live performance and as purchasable goods.

Eventually Remick did release sheet music for ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon,’ but even then its stage history was not featured prominently as a marketing tool. The cover first issued for ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ emphasizes the kind of scene suggested by the song’s lyrics – romance by moonlight – more prominently than anyone or anything else. Neither Bayes nor Norworth is identified as a Follies performer for the song; their appearance in a small photo on the cover is there to indicate their role as songwriters. Only a small note in the upper right hand corner states that the song was performed in the Follies of 1908. Moreover, ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ does not feature the cover used for
a number of other songs from the *Follies of 1908*. Most of the production numbers issued as sheet music feature a cover with a woman in jester costume juggling the heads of those burlesqued in the Follies sketches. Theatrical songs performed by principals such as Bayes often used something other than the standard production cover, but most featured the performer and the production more prominently than does the 1908 cover for ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon.’ For instance, ‘You Will Have to Sing an Irish Song,’ one of the 1908 Follies songs for which critics praised Bayes, features a different cover than that used for the majority of the songs of the *Follies of 1908*, but its cover prominently features a portrait of Bayes and specifically describes her as the performer of the song in the *Follies of 1908*. An even more pronounced example is found on the cover of ‘Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly,’ which Bayes performed in *The Jolly Bachelors* in 1909. Its cover features a large portrait of Bayes as the song’s performer and proclaims *The Jolly Bachelors* as the show in which she brought it to public attention.

If publisher Jerome Remick was only minimally enticed to use the stage history of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ in marketing the song, the recording industry was even less interested. However, marketing based on the relationship of a song to a particular show or performer was not nearly as common in the recording industry as it was in the publishing industry at the time. As Tim Gracyk has pointed out, songs were rarely recorded by the same singer who brought them to public attention in the theatre.\footnote{Tim Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers: 1895-1925* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2000), 18.} The recording artist and the performing artist were largely separate professions until the late teens and twenties. And even then, piano rolls and instrumental dance records still
provided singer-less versions of songs to a considerable portion of the public. The fact that extant recordings from this period feature such prolific recording artists as Harry Macdonough and Miss Walton (Victor) and Ada Jones and Billy Murray (Edison) rather than Bayes and Norworth – who did a fair amount of recording themselves – is therefore not entirely surprising. Nevertheless, the early recording history of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ is one more illustration of how the song was not immediately associated with its premiere theatrical performance in the *Follies of 1908*.

The association of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ with the *Follies of 1908* gained strength with the song’s second appearance on the Follies stage in 1931. In a scene called ‘Broadway Reverie,’ Ruth Etting performed ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ as a tribute to Nora Bayes. One reviewer described the performance with these words: “Nora Bayes was represented by Ruth Etting…who imitated the late beloved blues-singer splendidly…even to the e-nor-mous ostrich feather fan which Nora always used to wave as she warbled her philosophical little ditties.” A picture of Etting dressed as Bayes, including the ostrich feather fan, is featured on a second edition of the sheet music for ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ which the Jerome H. Remick company issued around the time

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12 Gracyk writes that Bayes and Norworth did record ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ for Victor in 1910, but that it was not issued, “presumably because it would have competed with a popular version sung by Harry Macdonough and Miss Walton on Victor 16259.” However, it seems strange that the duo would record the song if the Victor label would not consider issuing a duplicate recording. Perhaps the company felt the Bayes-Norworth recording was not a good cut and was rejected on technical grounds. See [http://www.gracyk.com/norabayes.shtml](http://www.gracyk.com/norabayes.shtml) (accessed 3/19/2007).

of Etting’s Follies performance. Etting also recorded the song at this time; it was featured on Perfect 12737 along with another song she performed in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1931 – ‘Cigarettes, Cigars.’

While Etting managed to make the song her own, the fact that she performed ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ as a tribute to Nora Bayes also recalled the association it had with its original singer, an association which had surpassed the one between the song and the Follies. Indeed, Etting’s performance renewed the tripartite relationship between song, singer, and production, the last part of which had seemingly not been as essential to the song’s history prior to this point. Thus Etting, ironically more so than Bayes, identified ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ with the Ziegfeld Follies. In the subsequent years, the association was strengthened by the song’s inclusion in The Great Ziegfeld and other productions celebrating the history of the Follies.

14 The sheet music lists 1918 as the copyright date for the song, but Remick must have secured the rights to the song at that time for some reason other than reissue. The 1931 issue is suggested not only by the picture of Etting on the front, but by another song with a 1931 copyright advertised on the last page.
16 The phrase “Ruth Etting’s song is ‘Shine On Harvest Moon’” appears in a New York Times article by Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr. entitled “Branding the Performers” from February 18, 1934. In its discussion of how radio was encouraging listeners to associate certain sounds, phrases, and songs with specific performers, the author suggests the association of Etting with ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon.’
17 In a New York Times article from July 12, 1942, Marion Spitzer reminisces about “Nora Bayes singing ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ at the Palace Monday afternoons…” Though she is reminiscing years later, this passage strongly suggests that Bayes performed the song multiple times outside the context of the Follies and that her performances were memorable enough to create an association between singer and song.
'My Man'

Fanny made them cry...as she stood on a partially darkened stage in a plain black dress under what was supposed to be a French street light and sang wistfully and forlornly “Oh! My man, I love him so...” She popularized ‘Rose of Washington Square,’ ‘Second-hand Rose,’ and on the lighter side ‘Becky Is Back In the Ballet,’ ‘I’m An Indian,’ and a score or so more; but she never again reached the heights of ‘My Man’ and there was good reason for it. The reason was that the song came straight from Fanny’s despairing, fiercely loyal, love-torn heart.19

Marjorie Farnsworth,
The Ziegfeld Follies

After attending a performance of the famous French music-hall singer Mistinguett at the Casino de Paris, Channing Pollock decided to write an anglicized version of one of her songs, a song entitled ‘Mon Homme.’ Having provided material for the Follies on previous occasions, Pollock presented his translated ‘My Man’ to Ziegfeld, and it was he who suggested that the song be performed by Fanny Brice in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1921. Pollock’s English lyric was notably different from the original. “I had made an almost literal translation of the lyric on my way home,” he later recalled, “and finding it impossible, had written completely new verses with the original theme.”20 Pollock does not elaborate on why his literal translation was unsuitable, but Barbara Grossman has inferred that his version was designed to compensate for cultural differences between Paris and New York. In Grossman’s words, “the predominantly middle class crowds that flocked to the Follies would not have tolerated the [French] song’s sadomasochistic

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overtones and intimations of immorality.”21 One such overtone eliminated by Pollock was the exchange of money between the protagonist and the man of whom she sings, an exchange which intimates a relationship between prostitute and pimp rather than between lovers. Grossman argues that this omission is particularly significant, for it not only makes the song more socially acceptable for New Yorkers; it also makes the singer of the song “more sympathetic.” It offered Fanny Brice an opportunity to use her stage performance as an outlet of personal expression and to receive sympathy for her well-publicized troubled marriage to Nicky Arnstein, who in 1920 was convicted of larceny and incarcerated.22 Brice took advantage of that opportunity, but she did not realize its fullest potential until several years after her original performances of the song in the Ziegfeld Follies.

Critics of the Ziegfeld Follies of 1921 praised Brice’s ability to transcend her comic stage persona and perform something serious.23 They made no suggestion, however, that her performance was a personal expression about her relationship with her husband. Herbert Goldman has suggested that the critics, “very much aware of Arnstein’s situation,” may have been “striving to avoid comments the increasingly sophisticated ‘twenties’ might have seen as obvious or mawkish.”24 This may be true, but it does not explain why writers from the same newspapers would be less discreet a

23 New York Times, June 22, 1921; Variety, June 24, 1921.
few years later. *The New York Times* acknowledged autobiographical readings into Brice’s dramatic song performances in late 1927, suggesting that she even refused to sing ‘My Man’ as a result of the gossip which she faced as a result.\(^{25}\)

The public acknowledgement that Brice could personally identify with the protagonist of ‘My Man’ in 1927 does not necessarily indicate that audiences did not make such a connection when she performed the song in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1921*. Indeed, many probably did. There is, however, strong evidence to suggest that Brice facilitated autobiographical readings of ‘My Man’ in the late twenties by altering the manner in which she performed the song.

Brice recorded ‘My Man’ for the Victor label sometime during or shortly after the run of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1921*, a recording which was released on Victor 45263 along with another of her songs from the revue that year, ‘Second Hand Rose.’ Presumably similar in style to her performance of the song in the Follies, the recording features a quick tempo, especially for a ballad, and relatively little rubato. The tempo allows Brice to sing two verses and two choruses, even in the short recording span allowed on a 78rpm record. Her performance is not without expression, but it lacks the pathos of a later recording she did in 1927/28, released on Victor 21168. That pathos comes from several significant changes in Brice’s style. The 1927/28 recording features a markedly slower pace; she only fits one verse and one chorus into the same time used for the 1921 version. Brice uses rubato extensively to fluctuate the already slow tempo and even speaks some lines during the chorus. And, she sings in a key a fourth lower.

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\(^{25}\) *New York Times*, November 27, 1927.
than is used in the 1921 recording. Each of these is a musical marker of increased emotion on the part of the singer. A rendering such as that heard on the 1927/28 recording is therefore more apt to be read as an expression of the singer’s inner turmoil than the rendition heard on the 1921 recording.

In *The Great Ziegfeld*, Brice performs ‘My Man’ in much the same manner as she does on the 1927/28 recording. By layering this rendition of the song onto a scene in the film depicting her original performance in the Follies, Brice was clearly attempting to reshape the memory of that performance. She was seemingly successful, for even her fellow performers have recalled her Follies performance of the song as highly emotional. In 1923, however, Gilbert Seldes suggested that Yvonne George “sang it better simply because the figure she evoked as Mon Homme was exactly the fake apache about whom it was written, and not the ‘my feller’ who lurked behind Miss Brice.” Seldes clearly recognized a source of personal inspiration behind Brice’s singing, but it is significant that he did not consider her initial rendition of the song to be better or more heartfelt as a result.

‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’

‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ is the consummate Ziegfeld Follies song, the one that most conjures up visions of beautiful women descending a staircase. Irving Berlin wrote the elegant, graceful ballad for the 1919 edition of the Follies, where

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it was sung by John Steel. As part of the lavish production number, girls dressed as classical music selections were seen while the orchestra played fragments from Dvorak’s “Humoresque,” Mendelssohn’s “Spring Song,” Schubert’s “Serenade” and others.\textsuperscript{28}

Thomas Hischak,  
*The American Musical Theatre Song Encyclopedia*

‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ is the feature production number of *The Great Ziegfeld*. Even before it won Seymour Felix an Academy Award for Best Dance Direction in 1936, it garnered the praise of New York film critics as an unparalleled spectacle of music and visual theatrics.\textsuperscript{29} The praise is not difficult to understand. The number begins with a tenor singing alone in front of the curtain, a curtain which soon opens to reveal an elaborately constructed revolving spiral staircase filled with lavishly costumed women and men. As the staircase moves, it reveals different styles of costume and dance complementary to the classic melodies interwoven into Irving Berlin’s song. It is indeed an impressive conclusion to the first half of the film.

The film version of ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ would probably have pleased Ziegfeld in its opulence and in its use of the song as representative of his theatrical production numbers. Irving Berlin’s lyrics reflect the impresario’s feminine ideal through musical analogy. Yet ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ was not initially


\textsuperscript{29}Frank S. Nugent of the *New York Times*: “One of its spectacular numbers, ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody,’ never had been equaled on the musical comedy stage or screen.” Regina Crewe of the *New York American*: “The spectacular climax is attained in the utterly thrilling presentation of the ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody’ number. We recall nothing so breath-taking on any screen.” These and other extracts from reviews were printed collectively in the *New York Times* on April 13, 1936.
conceived as a theme song for the Follies. Nor was it originally staged as the grandiose production number suggested by *The Great Ziegfeld*. According to Irving Berlin,

Ziegfeld asked him for a song suited to set of costumes he had already ordered so that they would not go to waste.

[Ziegfeld said to me] “Look at these costumes. I have to have a number for them; my bookkeeper will kill me.” So I went home. I looked at the costume plates. I thought of melodies to go with each girl and gown. “Traumerei,” a Viennese waltz, etc. But I had to have a song to introduce the number and close it. Then I wrote lyrics and music to fit the action.\(^{30}\)

Ziegfeld must have had six of these costumes, for the program lists only six women of the chorus in the number, each dressed to represent one of the familiar melodies selected by Berlin.\(^{31}\)

‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ therefore featured considerably fewer chorus girls than several of the other numbers in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919*. Perhaps Ziegfeld felt the costumes provided enough opulence for the song. Indeed, that is how Doris Eaton Travis remembers it.

The curtain parted on an empty, dark stage. As the music started, the spotlight picked up John Steel walking slowly to center stage from the backdrop. John had a beautiful, clear tenor voice, and he sang the verse and a chorus of the Berlin song. Then as each girl appeared – one at a time – the music switched to refrains of well-known classical compositions, such as Mendelssohn’s “Song of Spring” and Offenbach’s “Barcarolle.” With each “haunting refrain,” the spotlight picked up a showgirl, dressed to match the mood of the music. She walked toward John, flirted a bit, and continued past him, fading into the darkness of the stage, while he sang the humorous lyrics of love found and love lost to one of those classic melodies. After all five girls had appeared, John sang a final chorus of “A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody,” as the five beauties surrounded him.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) Program, Joseph Urban Collection, Columbia University, Box 16, Folder 10.

\(^{32}\) Doris Eaton Travis, 78.
Eaton Travis may not recall every detail correctly; she remembers five girls instead of six. But her description seems consistent with what would have been likely given the performers used for the number.

Reviews also suggest that ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ was well-composed and well-sung, but not the most remarkable production number in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919*.33 ‘Tulip Time,’ by Dave Stamper and Gene Buck, garnered the most praise as a production number. One reviewer suggested that the number was “worth going miles to look at.”34 Furthermore, when the song was published by T.B. Harms, a two-page advertisement in *Variety* hailed the song as “the unqualified song hit of the Ziegfeld Follies of 1919” and “the biggest production number in America.”35

Irving Berlin acknowledged that ‘Tulip Time’ surpassed his song in initial popularity. “It wasn’t the hit of the show,” he said in 1954. “‘Tulip Time’ was the hit then – “Pretty Girl” has become the hit.”36 Notably, the initial popularity of ‘Tulip Time’ may have contributed to the eventual status of ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody.’ The two songs were recorded by John Steel during or shortly after the run of the Follies and were issued together on opposite sides of Victor 18588.37 Recordings, however, cannot account for the reputation of ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ as a lavish production number. As Doris Eaton Travis acknowledges, that concept is derived from the

33 *Variety*, June 20, 1919.
34 *Variety*, June 20, 1919.
35 *Variety*, November 21, 1919.
37 An advertisement for Victor Records in the *New York Times* on August 30, 1919 features Victor 18588 as one of its new issues for September of that year.
performance of the song in *The Great Ziegfeld*. It is perhaps because the film version seems so much like what the impresario did for other production numbers that makes its conflation with the original stage version so easy.

**Originals and Recreations**

Recreated performances are responsible for the legends surrounding each of these songs. In the case of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon,’ it was Ruth Etting’s impersonation of Nora Bayes in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1931* that reshaped the perception of how the song was initially received in the *Follies of 1908*. Fanny Brice revised her own original rendition of ‘My Man’ with subsequent live performances, a recording, and a rendition captured in *The Great Ziegfeld*. Seymour Felix’s elaborate version of ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ in *The Great Ziegfeld* reinvented the more modest version featured in the 1919 stage production. Such is often the nature artistic expression. Artists imitate each other, reinvent themselves, and create new products out of old ones. It is not the recreation of original Follies performances which is problematic; it is the failure to recognize these recreated performances as imitations, reinventions, and variations only loosely obligated to the original performances which inspired them.

The conflation of recreated performances and original performances in the case of these songs from the Follies is illustrative of how the Follies have been received by American popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Legends such as these have seemingly not been investigated because they are part of the mystique of the Follies.

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38 Doris Eaton Travis, 78.
They may not reveal the precise history of these songs, but they do represent the aesthetic of the Follies. They demonstrate how Ziegfeld continues to dazzle his audiences even after his death.
CHAPTER 3

CHORUS GIRLS AND SUFFRAGETTES

Defining Femininity

As noted in the previous chapter, ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ has come to be characterized as the theme song of the Ziegfeld Follies. The reason is no doubt the manner in which Irving Berlin’s lyrics correlate with the image of the Ziegfeld Girl, the image of femininity which has come to represent the Ziegfeld revues and which has influenced perceptions of femininity well after the final production of the Follies.39 As Philip Furia has observed, ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody “evokes not so much a flesh-and-blood reality but a tantalizing ideal of seductive beauty, the perfect evocation of Ziegfeld’s floating, gossamer-clad visions.”40

Such is the image of femininity most readily identified with the Follies, but it was not the only representation of women presented by Ziegfeld. The songs of the Follies discussed in this chapter portray women as chorus girls and the suffragettes, two of the most prevalent female stereotypes of the time. These stereotypes and the songs based on them reflect how traditional definitions of femininity were simultaneously being

challenged and reinforced at the time. Situated alongside Ziegfeld’s opulent female displays, these songs reveal a more nuanced definition of femininity than is often associated with the Follies.

**The Chorus Girl**

Stereotypical images of the chorus girl in the early twentieth century were generated as much by her offstage reputation as her onstage activities. She was reputed to have scores of suitors who offered her diamonds, dinners, and anything else she desired. “Much has been told about the conventional chorus girl,” wrote a columnist for *The New York Times* in 1903, “with her abnormal appetite for lobsters, birds, and champagne; her love of late hours and convivial companions, her coupes, diamonds, palatial apartments, and other ridiculous nonsense.”⁴¹ Among those telling such stories was Madge Merton. Her 1903 novel entitled *Confessions of a Chorus Girl* describes a chorus girl’s dreams of “interviews and salaries and stolen diamonds.”⁴² Fellow novelist Roy McCardell offered his version of the stereotype in *Conversations of a Chorus Girl*, also published in 1903. In its prefatory pages, “The Calendar of a Chorus Girl” outlines the events thought to be typical for a young woman working in the theatre. February’s entry reads this way: “Have the cutest little flat; have a fluffy Persian cat. Wealthy man he offers marriage, also a big red horseless carriage.” In March, the chorus girl responds

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⁴¹ *New York Times*, March 8, 1903.
to the proposal: “Get the auto, but turn down marriage idea with a frown. Say, ‘I love with all my heart, but I’m wedded to my art!’”

Though numerous accounts suggest that the average chorus girl lived a fairly unglamorous lifestyle, there were some true-to-life examples of the stereotype. In the words of Lois Banner, the so-called Floradora Girls “made the mythology of chorus girl success a stunning reality.” These women won enormous fame given the small amount of visibility they had in the 1900 production of the English musical comedy *Floradora* at New York’s Casino Theatre. In his memoirs, Casino Theatre manager Rudolph Aronson remembered the fervor with which the public followed the offstage lives of these women: “Upon every hand you heard nothing but stories about the piece,…of the enormous fortunes made by the different chorus girls in Wall Street speculations, of their various matrimonial affairs, and as for the famous sextette, their names and reputed exploits were to be found in the public prints at least seven days a week.” Notably, a number of chorines were eager to capitalize on the public status of the Floradora girls. Rudolf Aronson suggested that “at least nine-tenths of the chorus damsels in the world” claimed to have been one of the original members of the sextet. Novelist Roy McCardell must

have observed this trend as well; his fictional chorus girl introduces herself to McCardell and to his readers as an original Floradora girl, astutely recognizing the potential for fame and fortune that might accompany such a claim, whether true or false.\textsuperscript{46}

Not long before the premiere of the \textit{Ziegfeld Follies of 1920}, the Shuberts produced a revival of \textit{Floradora}. The show was a success, especially in its reproduction of the Floradora girls and their famous musical number, ‘Tell Me, Pretty Maiden.’ In his review for \textit{The New York Times}, Alexander Woollcott suggested that “it was the ‘Tell me, pretty maiden’ melody for which last night’s audience was waiting and there was a great hullabaloo when it began, with the heads nodding and the hats lifting as of yore.” Moreover, Wolcott wrote, “the greater excitement was manifested in the more elderly bosoms when, for an encore, there emerged from the wings six pompadoured girls, clad in the flapping hats and long black gloves and flowing trains of the first sextette.”\textsuperscript{47}

With the Floradora girls freshly revived in the minds of New York audiences, Fanny Brice used their offstage image as beautiful, wealthy, well-married women as comedic fodder in the \textit{Ziegfeld Follies of 1920}. In her performance of ‘I Was a Floradora Baby,’ written by Ballard Macdonald and Harry Carroll, Brice portrayed a former Floradora Girl. The song describes her experience “twenty years ago” in which she was one of “six little happy little showgirls.” Now, however, while “all the other girls are living fancy,” her address is “Seventeen Delancey.” Unlike the other Floradora Girls who married one of their many wealthy suitors, she “had to fall in love with Abie, a

\textsuperscript{46} Roy McCardell, 3-14.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{New York Times}, April 6, 1920.
drummer with a fancy vest.” Significantly, she is not entirely happy in her choice. She loves her husband, but she envies her fellow Floradora Girls. She seeks the wealth and celebrity that she did not choose. As such, she simultaneously confirms and denies the chorus girl stereotype. Because she desires fame and fortune, she inwardly embodies the chorus girl stereotype even while her less-than-glamorous lifestyle contradicts it.

Fanny Brice portrayed this disjunction between the stereotype and the reality, between the exception and the rule, with a special kind of irony. By 1920, the Follies had produced several of its own celebrity chorines who were as well-known for their offstage lives as the original Floradora Girls – women like Olive Thomas, Jessie Reed, and the one-named Dolores. Fanny Brice had appeared in some of the same productions as these women and had earned equivalent fame and fortune. She did not, however, fit the mold of the so-called Ziegfeld Girl, the idealized beauty of the Follies. Like the forlorn Floradora Girl she portrayed, she did not outwardly exhibit the most qualifying characteristic of the chorines with whom she was associated.

The Floradora Girls exemplified the celebrity and wealth of the stereotypical chorus girl. To a lesser extent, they also demonstrated her ability to manipulate men with sex; their ability to win wealthy husbands was presumably their sexual appeal. This dimension of the chorus girl stereotype is central to a song entitled ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie,” performed in the Follies of 1909. The song, written by Gus Edwards and Edward Madden, tells the tale of a young chorine who also has a passion for baseball. After cheering at a game, she invites the baseball players to see her perform. In

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stereotypical chorus girl fashion, she favors the richest among the players: “She’d sing to
the nine that could buy the most wine.” Moreover, she uses her onstage performance to
appeal to their sexual desire: “I know lots of places where we can ‘run bases,’ if you’ll
only wait for me after the show.”

This kind of sexually aggressive behavior on the part of a female character was
undoubtedly surprising to 1909 audiences. Even so, the shock of the woman’s sexually
aggressive behavior was mediated by her identify as a chorus girl. On the one hand,
chorus girls shunned the traditional role of women in society. They worked outside the
home and earned salaries which were equal if not higher than those of women working in
other industries at the time. In the estimation of Lewis Erenberg, “some of the girls lived
with families or sent their salaries home, but some managed to live single, independent
lives, with money for personal exploration outside the homes of their fathers and
husbands.” Despite their independence, however, the type of work performed by the
chorus girl kept her from posing too great a challenge to traditional sexual roles. As
Linda Mizejewski argues, the chorus girl was a working woman, but one in a position
that “avoids questions of authority and education and which further connects women to
issues of appearance and décor.” With chorus girl as protagonist, then, the sexual
aggression in ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie,’ is both provocative and acceptable.
The inherent femininity of the chorine facilitates her emasculating behavior. The overtly

49 Edward Madden and Gus Edwards, ‘Come on Play Ball with Me Dearie’ (New York:
50 Lewis Erenberg, Steppin’ Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of
51 Linda Mizejewski, 74.
feminine identity of the chorus girl even enabled the women who performed ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie’ to dress and act like men. The cover of the published sheet music shows the Ziegfeld chorus dressed in baseball uniforms, pitching balls, and swinging bats.\textsuperscript{52} and according to one account of the performance, “the audience was pelted by soft baseballs.”\textsuperscript{53}

Lillian Lorraine was the original lead performer for ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie,’ but she was soon replaced by Eva Tanguay.\textsuperscript{54} The reason was likely the correlation between the song’s protagonist and Tanguay’s onstage persona. By the time she entered the Follies, she already had a reputation for blatantly using her sexuality in her performances and for using musical material that was inherently sexual in theme.\textsuperscript{55} In short, she portrayed the protagonist of ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie’ in her other performances. She was joined by Follies chorines who functioned in much the same manner as she did. They were portraying the stereotypical version of themselves.

In the chorus girl stereotype, the traditional and the modern merge. The things desired by the chorine – beauty, a wealthy husband, jewels – are traditionally feminine.

\textsuperscript{52} Gus Edwards and Edward Madden, “Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie” (New York: Gus Edwards, 1909).
\textsuperscript{53} Unidentified Clipping, NYPL, Baral Papers, Box 13, Folder 3.
\textsuperscript{54} Lillian Lorraine appears on the sheet music cover for ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie,’ issued by Gus Edwards’ publishing company in 1909. However, Eva Tanguay is listed as the soloist for the number in a program dated November 29, 1909. According to a report in \textit{The New York Times} on July 7, 1909, Tanguay entered the cast at that time.
She embraces the traditional view of femininity as an object of beauty and desire, both onstage and onstage. Yet she becomes modern by virtue of her traditional appearance. It is her undeniable femininity which enables her to work, make money, and pursue men.

The greatest irony of this stereotype is its relationship to reality. The Floradora Girls and the celebrated Ziegfeld Girls who followed them are exceptional examples of the stereotype. Nevertheless, the chorus girl profession afforded many more women the opportunity to earn money and gain independence with little or no question of their sexual identity. These women could be modern because they simultaneously embodied a traditional view of femininity.

**The Suffragette**

In her embrace of certain aspects of traditional femininity, the chorus girl stood in direct opposition to the stereotypical suffragette. Indeed, the stereotype of the suffragette was based on the notion that she was the antithesis of femininity. Anti-suffragists such as Robert Afton Holland believed that female suffrage would make women “ugly and coarse” and that suffragettes themselves were “large-handed, big-footed, flat-chested, and thin-lipped.”\(^{56}\) Suffragettes were also thought to possess emotional attributes identified as masculine. They were frequently portrayed in silent films as militant, physically abusive, and cynical.\(^{57}\)

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57 Kay Sloan, 417.
Written by Nat D. Ayer and Harry Williams for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1913*, ‘That Ragtime Suffragette’ presents a quintessential portrayal of the suffragette from the perspective of the anti-suffrage man. This portrayal emphasizes how a woman’s political ambition affects the lifestyle of the traditionally-minded man. The man’s frustration is apparent in this line from the song’s chorus: “While her husband’s waiting home to dine, she is ragging up and down the line shouting votes, votes, votes, votes, votes for women.” Such sentiment is reiterated more strongly in the second verse with the lines “Why don’t you go home and bake a cake? One like dear old mother used to make?” Stereotypical images such as these were generated by men opposed to women’s suffrage.

There were, of course, many women who also opposed the right to vote. These women disparaged the suffragette not for her desire to control men but for her failure to understand the sexual advantage she already possessed. In the words of Kay Sloan, “Many women worried that suffrage would erode their traditional sources of subtle power.” Such a view is evident in the third verse and chorus of ‘I Should Worry and Get Wrinkles,’ a song performed by Ray Samuels a year earlier in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912*. “I should care if women vote?” says the protagonist. “With just a little jolly, I can get an unbor [sic] velvet opera coat!”

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59 Kay Sloan, 421.
60 Vincent Bryan and Raymond Hubbell, ‘I Should Worry and Get Wrinkles’ (New York: Chas. K. Harris, 1912).
The protagonists in ‘That Ragtime Suffragette’ and ‘I Should Worry and Get Wrinkles’ were undoubtedly intended to be humorous caricatures. Nevertheless, the songs represent the suffragette as decidedly unfeminine; she lacks both the domesticity and the sexual appeal traditionally associated with women. It is probably for this reason that the suffragette was not physically portrayed in the stage performance of either song; she was only described by male and female characters who found her to be emasculating, misguided, or both. The reputation of the suffragette circa 1913 was the antithesis of how Ziegfeld wanted to portray women in his productions. To have one of his chorines appear as a suffragette would have conflicted with his larger purpose.

Four years later, however, the reputation of the suffragette was changing. In ‘The Modern Maiden’s Prayer,’ a song featured in Eddie Cantor’s specialty act for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1917*, the masculine traits of the suffragette described in the songs of the earlier Follies productions are mediated by traits traditionally identified as feminine. Indeed, the suffragette is depicted in a manner similar to the chorus girl – a combination of old and new manifestations of femininity. Cantor’s second chorus begins with lines expressing the suffragette’s fundamental desire: “Give me a chance to vote and get some fellow’s goat. Give me the right the search my husband’s pants and coat.” Moreover, she is still described as less than beautiful: “If I display much, be optimistic. Give me a man with an eye that’s artistic.” Significantly, though, the suffragette clearly wants to be considered pretty. She follows these lines with ones more evocative of the chorus girl than of the suffragette, at least as she was conceived in the early 1910s.
Give me a bathing suit so folks can say I’m cute
Don’t let the water even touch my hair
And if my marriage proves to be phony, give me lots of alimony
That is the twentieth century maiden’s prayer.\(^{61}\)

Cantor thus identifies the suffragette as fundamentally feminine, a characterization which undoubtedly resulted from the growing strength of the suffrage movement in the latter half of the 1910s. As the suffragette came to represent a larger percentage of the population, the stereotype had to change to reflect her more mainstream role in society. She came to have more in common with her fellow modern maiden, the chorus girl. Like the chorine, the suffragette retained traditionally feminine qualities even as she sought opportunities not afforded her in the nineteenth century.

Ziegfeld’s Women

The Ziegfeld Follies featured different, even contrasting portrayals of women in its songs. Ultimately, it was not a single portrayal of women which created the idealized image commonly associated with the Follies but the shared manner in which femininity was defined by different portrayals of women. Even when the chorus girl and the suffragette were being caricatured, they were reinforcing Ziegfeld’s definition of femininity, a definition which, significantly, combined old and new ideas. Ziegfeld’s love of terms such as “glorification” and “pulchritude” was, as Linda Mizejewski has

\(^{61}\) These lyrics are featured on Eddie Cantor’s recording of ‘The Modern Maiden’s Prayer,’ Victor 18342. They are not printed in the sheet music issued by Shapiro, Bernstein, and Company in 1917. It is unclear whether they were conceived by the songwriters or by Cantor himself.
argued, “openly nostalgic for Victorian True Womanhood.” Moreover, his ornamental use of women in his productions grew out of a nineteenth-century mindset. At the same time, his employment of women and the central place they held in his productions suggest his willingness to acknowledge modern feminine identities. Ultimately, the songs discussed in this chapter reveal the extent to which the Follies reflected American popular opinion. The stereotypical characteristics of the chorus girl and the suffragette reveal a culture whose definition of femininity was changing. Ziegfeld therefore adapted his portrayals of women accordingly in order to garner an audience for his productions.

62 Linda Mizejewski, 79.
CHAPTER 4

STEPS AND SHIMMIES

Social Dancing in the 1910s

Around 1910, the predominantly white, middle-class audience who frequented Broadway theatres and nightclubs began appropriating black social dances. Replacing nineteenth-century European dances revolutionized the centuries-old practice of social dancing into a modern, popular fad. Dancing the so-called ragtime dances to ragtime music became the favored activity of white New Yorkers. By 1920, the interest in African-American cultural expression was so great that white New Yorkers were regularly venturing into Harlem to see and hear the latest innovations in music and dance.

The Ziegfeld Follies illuminate the white appropriation of black social dances in New York during the 1910s with exceptional clarity. The songs of the Follies discussed in this chapter reveal different appropriation methods for black social dances between the early 1910s and the late 1910s. In the early years of the decade, white dancers imitated certain elements of the original expression but disregarded many others. Moreover, they either failed to acknowledge the original or denigrated it as primitive. By 1920, however, white dancers were modifying less of what they borrowed and even acknowledging their source of inspiration.

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The Early 1910s

The appropriation of black dance forms was in large part a reaction against Victorian culture and the formal structure of its dances. In the words of Lewis Erenberg, “respectable whites sought a greater emphasis on body movement rather than patterned feet movement.” Moreover, Erenberg argues, the black dances also encouraged a greater level of informality in the social interaction between the sexes. “Doing the turkey trot, grizzly bear, monkey glide, bunny hug, lame duck, or fox-trot, whites did movements that placed them closer to the natural processes of the animal kingdom than to the restrained pinnacle of the genteel hierarchy that they and well-to-do women had occupied in the Victorian era.”

Despite the desire for greater physical freedom in the early 1910s, however, whites often modified black dances in order to maintain what was deemed an appropriate degree of decorum. Many were not yet ready to break away completely from nineteenth-century ideals. Numerous scholars of dance and of cultural history have written about the significant role played by Vernon and Irene Castle in generating a positive public image for black dances and for the ragtime music of black bandleader James Reese Europe that accompanied them. The English gentleman and his fashionable American wife put a

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64 Ibid, 154.
respectable face on social dancing. They modeled the freedom of movement in the black dances within the European framework for acceptable dancing movements inherited from the nineteenth century. In an interview with *The Dancing Times*, for example, Irene Castle described the original dances as being in “a very primitive condition” which needed to be “considerably toned down.”\(^{66}\) Such efforts to modify the dances are evident in *Modern Dancing*, an instruction manual published by the Castles with the assistance of socialite Elizabeth Marbury.\(^{67}\) Susan C. Cook has characterized the manual as “a veritable description of how to dance ‘white.’”\(^{68}\) It recommends that dancers avoid wriggling the shoulders, shaking the hips, twisting the body, flouncing the elbows, pumping the arms, hopping, and dipping.\(^{69}\) *Modern Dancing* does not explicitly tie these actions to the original dances, but the Castles must have had some reason for cautioning against such movements and their inclusion in the original dances seems the most likely possibility.

The Castles were perhaps the most visible figures involved in the white refinement of black dances, but they were not alone in their viewpoint or in their efforts. Nor were they the only ones to publish a dance instruction manual. In the same year the

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\(^{66}\) *Dancing Times*, untitled clipping, approximately 1918 or 1919, in Castle Scrapbooks. Quoted in Lewis Erenberg, 163.

\(^{67}\) Cook suggests that the Castles are the supposed authors of *Modern Dancing*, indicating some degree of doubt as to how much the Castles actually contributed to its contents. See Susan C. Cook, “Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform…,” 141-142.

\(^{68}\) Susan C. Cook, 142.

Castles published their manual, Albert Newman published *Dances of To-Day*. His manual outlines his version of the steps and postures for the popular social dances of the day. Throughout Newman’s book, there is an emphasis on combining the freedom of movement suggested by the original dances and on containing the movement for standards of respectability. In an early chapter, Newman describes the original dances as “grotesque,” “abnormal,” and “inartistic.” In his estimation, however, “sanity and decency have prevailed along with the innovations; and it is evident that a strong tide has set in toward the artistic and graceful as against the freakish and bizarre.”

Popular between 1910 and 1914, the Texas Tommy was one of many dances whose history demonstrates the appropriation method described by the Castles and by Albert Newman. The dance was thought to have originated on southern plantations, later migrating with blacks to the Barbary Coast of San Francisco and eventually spreading across the country to New York around 1910. Moreover, it was characterized as the “parent” of other popular dances of the time such as the Grizzly Bear, the Loving Hug, the Walk-Back and the Turkey-Trot.

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71 Harris, Val and Sid Brown, ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ (New York: Jerome Remick, 1911). Dance historians Marshall and Jean Stearns corroborate the essential aspects of this history and add a few more details. Based on a series of interviews, they name Johnny Peters as the man responsible for bringing the Texas Tommy to San Francisco from the south. Peters and others, including Will Mastin, then took the dance with them as they moved eastward. See Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York: MacMillan, 1968), 128.
The precise differences between the Texas Tommy as it was danced by whites and as it was danced by blacks by the time it reached the east coast in the early 1910s are difficult to determine, but some general tendencies can be gleaned by comparing accounts of the dance from both black and white sources. Willie “the Lion” Smith, who frequently played piano at Leroy’s Restaurant in Harlem, described the dancing of the Texas Tommy this way: “The sharp dancin’ cats…would hop-skip three times and then throw a doll over their shoulders. Then they would hop-skip three more times and squat on their knees as they skated right on down the floor.” Ethel Williams, one of the premier black dancers in New York in the early teens, remembers it similarly: “…there were two basic steps – a kick and hop three times on each foot, and then add whatever you want, turning, pulling, sliding. Your partner had to keep you from falling…”

Albert Newman’s version of the Texas Tommy also includes three hops on each foot, but the style suggested by his description is, not surprisingly, markedly different from those of Smith and Williams:

Glide left foot to side (1), raise right foot a little to rear, and hop three times on the left foot; in this position count (2) (3) (4), turning to the right.

Repeat same with the right foot, continuing the turn, one measure.

This is virtually a skating movement and should be made with a slight bend on the first step. The hops should be made softly and the raised foot held not too high.

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73 Ethel Williams, Interview with Marshall and Jean Stearns, 1961. Quoted in Marshall and Jean Stearns, 129.
Glide left foot to side (1), hop on it with right foot raised slightly (2); same with right foot to right (3) (4). This is a Barn Dance Step.

Four short running steps forward left foot (1), right foot (2), left foot (3), right foot (4).

Repeat the entire dance, turning to the left also.

Great care should be taken not to exaggerate the hops, and to turn quite around in the skating movement.

There are a number of arrangements of the Texas Tommy, but none more suitable for ballroom purpose than this. 74

Newman makes no mention of anything like the kicking, throwing, or squatting movements recalled by Willie “the Lion” Smith and Ethel Williams. Hopping three times on each foot seems to be the only shared element between Newman’s version and the Harlem versions of the Texas Tommy. Moreover, Newman is quick to emphasize the importance of restraint even in the hopping.

Newman also suggests appropriate musical selections for the Texas Tommy, and one of the songs he names is ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ from the Ziegfeld Follies of 1911. 75 His suggestion may stem not only from the suitability of the song for dancing, but also from the actual movements prescribed by the lyrics and their musical setting. The chorus features the following lyrics:

> It’s a-hopping on the right  
> And a-hopping on the left,  
> Like a good old “Buck and Wing.”  
> Do a graceful slide by your baby’s side,  
> Like a birdie on the wing;  
> Throw your lovin’ arms around your baby’s waist,

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74 Alfred Newman, 164.  
75 Newman, 164. The author also mentions ‘Ephraim’s Brass Band Jones’ or “any schottische with a good swing.”
And to her softly sing
It’s the Texas,
It’s the Texas,
Oh you Texas Tommy Swing!76

The phrase ‘It’s a-hopping on the right and a-hopping on the left’ aligns with a repeating pattern of a dotted-eighth note followed by a sixteenth note. Each dotted-eighth falls on a primary beat of the bar.

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According to Newman’s interpretation, the dancers would glide on the first beat and hop on the three remaining beats.

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Like Newman, the songwriters of ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ do not incorporate any of the bigger, freer movements seemingly involved in black versions of the dance. Doing “a graceful glide by your baby’s side” is hardly the same as throwing your partner over your

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76 Val Harris and Sid Brown, ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ (New York: Jerome H. Remick, 1911).
shoulder. Neither is throwing “your lovin’ arms around your baby’s waist” equivalent to squatting down to your knees on the floor. And nowhere is there any indication to improvise, which Ethel Williams recalls as being part of the dance.

Ironically, ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ may reveal more about dancing in Manhattan nightclubs in the early 1910s than it does about the dancing used in the actual staging of the song in 1911. ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ was performed near the end of the show as the opening number for a scene called ‘New Year’s Eve on the Barbary Coast.’ It was performed by Lillian Lorraine; her picture is prominently displayed on the sheet music. That, however, is the extent of the evidence concerning the song’s appearance in the Follies. The critic for the New York Times didn’t name ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ in his review. He only indicated that “several dances were given” during the final portion of the show set on San Francisco’s Barbary Coast, one of which was provided by Lillian Lorraine. Unfortunately, the ambiguous nature of the phrase “several dances were given” is not clarified by the comments of other reviewers. According to Green Book critic Channing Pollock, ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ was an “uninspired ballad.” Such a phrase does not imply that the number involved much dance at all. On the other hand, the reviewer from Theatre Magazine describes the scene this way: “New Year’s Eve on

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77 In June 2006, a program for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1911 was auctioned on www.ebay.com and purchased by Gary Flannery, theatre faculty member at the University of Central Florida. This program provided this information.
78 Program, Colonial Theatre, October 1, 1911. The program lists Vera Maxwell as the singer for ‘The Texas Tommy Swing.’ She probably replaces Lillian Lorraine when the Follies went on tour during the fall.
the Barbary Coast” is a wild extravaganza, in the course of which Lillian Lorraine is violently tossed about in an Apache dance by Harry Watson and Leon Erroll, a performance that belongs to a review of the year no doubt, but which is not as delectable as it is riotous.81

Given the lyrics and music of ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ and the mainstream nature of the Follies, it seems unlikely that any dancing which did accompany the song’s performance in the Follies would have been anything other than what the song describes – a white version of the dance. Situating the song on the Barbary Coast, the San Francisco neighborhood which seemingly initiated the appropriation of the Texas Tommy throughout the rest of the country, undoubtedly indicated the dance’s history and its black roots to Follies audiences. At the same time, however, audiences could surely also see that the Follies representation of the dance was a distinctly white version, one that had been toned down from its Barbary Coast version.

Social dancing continued to inspire musical commentary in the next three Follies productions. Significantly, songs continued to depict the popular ragtime dances with little or no acknowledgment of the source from which they emanated. For example, a song entitled ‘The Broadway Glide’ from the Ziegfeld Follies of 1912 describes the popularity of social dancing in the predominantly white Broadway district of Manhattan. Indeed, the number was staged in and around Broadway with nearly every member of the cast dancing the turkey trot.82 Unlike ‘Texas Tommy Swing,’ then, ‘The Broadway

81 Theatre Magazine, August 1911.
82 New York Times, October 22, 1911: “There is plenty of life, too, in a dancing number by Stella Chatelaine and Louis Errol, and a touch of good satire in an ensemble, ‘The
Glide’ failed to suggest the black roots of social dancing even in its staging. Even so, the movements described in the song are less restricted than those described in ‘Texas Tommy Swing’ and ignore the suggestions set forth by either the Castles or Alfred Newman. “Just see how easy they’re taking it,” reads a lyric from the chorus of ‘The Broadway Glide.’ “Look ev’rybody is shaking it.”

It is difficult to determine from lyrics alone the extent to which the Follies dancers incorporated looser movements into their performance. Evidence suggests, however, that Follies productions of the early teens still presented the dances in a way that clearly distinguished them from the original black versions. In 1914, Ziegfeld purchased the right to perform a dance number from J. Leubrie Hill’s 1913 Harlem production of My Friend from Kentucky. The number, entitled ‘At the Ball, That’s All,’ demands that the dancers “do the tango jiggle with a Texas Tommy wiggle.” Ziegfeld hired Ethel Waters, a member of the original cast of My Friend from Kentucky, to teach the number to the Ziegfeld chorus. “I went down to the New York Theatre and showed the cast how

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Broadway Glide,’ which shows Times Square with the entire Broadway population doing the turkey trot.” Green Book Magazine, January 1913: “Herald Square is shown to music, with every human being who crosses it indulging in the turkey trot.” Green Book review reprinted in Selected Theatre Criticism, Volume 1: 1900-1919, edited by Anthony Slide, 343-44.


84 J. Leubrie Hill, ‘At the Ball, That’s All’ (New York: Lafayette Publishers, 1913). As wiggling is not mentioned in either black or white accounts of the Texas Tommy and jiggling is not normally associated with the tango, Hill’s lyric was probably intended to call for elements of the two dances rather than a juggle and a wiggle specifically. But just which elements were incorporated is difficult to say. In the case of the Texas Tommy, it may or may not have been the triple hop step.
to dance it,” Waters later recalled. “They were having trouble.”

Indeed, Carl van Vechten commented on the Follies version of the number in one of his essays. “The tunes remained pretty; the Follies girls undoubtedly were pretty, but the rhythm was gone, the thrill was lacking, the boom was inaudible, the Congo had disappeared.”

Thomas L. Riis suggests that it was the lack of familiarity with black dance on the part of the Follies cast that made learning ‘At the Ball, That’s All’ problematic. Significantly, this argument only reinforces the notion that white dancers had for several years been dancing the Texas Tommy and other similar dances with little if any of the genuine character of the originals.

That Ziegfeld borrowed ‘At the Ball, That’s All’ from a Harlem production reflects a significant trend in the history of musical theatre reception in New York. In the estimation of Riis, My Friend from Kentucky was the first Harlem production to attract a fair number of white patrons. Indeed, it must have been the Harlem production which sparked Ziegfeld’s interest, for the show was never seen on Broadway. This marked the beginning of white interest in witnessing Harlem culture firsthand, an interest which would become increasingly widespread in the next ten years and which is directly addressed in songs from Follies productions pertaining to social dancing practices in the late teens and twenties. As whites began to experience black culture directly, they

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88 Thomas J. Riis, 174.
maintained more of the original character of the dances they borrowed. They borrowed movements which would have been deemed unacceptable even a few years earlier. They even recognized the origins of the dances.

**The Late 1910s**

The most popular dance of the late teens and twenties was the shimmy, a dance defined by the shaking of the body. As Chadwick Hansen has illustrated, shaking dances have a long history in African-American culture. In Georgia in the 1830s, a white woman named Mrs. Fanny Kemble reported hearing slaves singing a song called ‘Jenny Gone Away’ which included a line Mrs. Kemble heard as ‘Jenny shake her toe at me.’ As Hansen explains, “what Mrs. Kemble heard was not the English word ‘toe’ but an African word that appeared both in the Afro-English of Georgia in 1839 and the Afro-French of Louisiana in 1947.” Hansen discloses the meaning of the word and, accordingly, of the song:

The probable original is the Kikongo *to*, a serviceable word that means “buttocks,” “haunch,” “thigh”; also “foreleg and shoulder” or “shoulder”; and, more generally, “body part or member.” What Jenny was shaking, then, was her hips, and what the song of “Jenny Gone Away” describes is a hip-shaking dance, probably of African origin…

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Hansen also describes variations of the Kikongo word *to*, including *toto* and *todalo*.

These are probably the linguistic roots of the word *toddle*, a name often used alongside or in exchange for the word *shimmy*. For example, a *New York Times* article from April 16, 1922 describes the toddle as the “little sister” of the shimmy.90

The shimmy was first popularized among whites in Chicago in the mid-teens by performers including Mae West, Gilda Gray, and Bee Palmer.91 Mae West is generally credited with the first Broadway performance of the shimmy in a 1918 production called *Sometime*. It was Gilda Gray and Bee Palmer, however, who achieved more success with the dance in vaudeville, at nightclubs, and on Broadway. Lewis Erenberg suggests that Gilda Gray “extended the acceptable limits of sexual display” through her careful use of facial expression: “While performing these wicked torso movements, she kept an impassive innocent face, which assured patrons she was respectable.”92 Jill Watts has similarly suggested that Bee Palmer’s shimmy was “simply less threatening to white audiences” than was Mae West’s version.93 Unlike the Castles, however, neither Gray

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90 *New York Times*, April 16, 1922. ‘Philadelphia dancing teachers hail with delight news from Buenos Aires that a new terphsichorean wrinkle, called the plesiosaurian glide, has been invented, and that three new tangoes have been dedicated to the Patagonian monster for which Argentine Naturalists are on a still hunt. They united today in saying that if the dance proves popular it will sound the death-knell of the “shimmy” and its little sister the “toddle.”’


92 Lewis Erenberg, 249-50.

nor Palmer seems to have altered or toned down the shimmy in terms of actual
movement. Indeed, an announcement of an appearance by Gilda Gray at the Palace in
1929 provides evidence to the contrary:

Gilda Gray, who more or less shook her way into wealth and celebrity, heads the new entertainment at the Palace this week in a series of characteristic dances. The “shimmy,” done with the maximum number of vibrations, is naturally one of her contributions, for it was her experiments in this art-form which first brought the dancer into prominence.94

The shimmy thus proves an interesting case study in the appropriation of black dance in the early twentieth century. According to the research already presented, the Texas Tommy and most other dances appropriated during the early 1910s were altered considerably during the borrowing process. Furthermore, the black roots of many of these dances were either ignored or recognized only to the extent that they were denigrated as primitive. In contrast, songs from the Follies suggest that the shimmy was appropriated in a different manner, one which celebrated the vivaciousness of the shimmy’s shaking movements and which highlighted the black origins of the dance.

‘Shimmee Town,’ sung by Johnny and Ray Dooley in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1919, links the shimmy to a specific place, one which is almost assuredly a metaphor for Harlem. The protagonists of ‘Shimmee Town’ represent the recent vogue among whites for frequenting Harlem theatres and nightclubs. They have recently discovered “Shimmee Town” and are encouraging their white friends to go and experience it for themselves. In the Follies number, the Dooleys succeeded in getting a chorus of “Shimmee Girls” to join in their newfound pleasure.

Significantly, ‘You Cannot Make Your Shimmy Shake on Tea,’ another song from the 1919 production of the Follies, also situates Harlem as the home of the shimmy – expressly so. “In the Harlem cabarets I used to spend my nights and days partaking of my fav’rite indoor sport, the Shimmy dance,”\(^95\) sings the protagonist portrayed by Bert Williams, the first African-American cast member of the Follies. Notably, however, Williams’s song was not accompanied by any actual dancing. On the one hand, this choice complements the anticipated absence of the shimmy – to be brought about by Prohibition – described in the song’s lyrics. Even so, the shimmy could have been represented as present in the mind or memory of the protagonist. This would have required black dancers, however. The white women of Ziegfeld’s chorus could not have appeared onstage with Williams; according to his biographer Ann Charters, Williams refused to appear on stage with the white women of Ziegfeld’s chorus for fear of public reaction to seeing a black man onstage with white women.\(^96\) Moreover, Ziegfeld was unwilling to add black women to his cast; he had not hired any of the original dancers from *My Friend from Kentucky* to perform in his 1914 production, and he was apparently not willing to hire any at this point either. That meant no dancing in ‘You Cannot Make Your Shimmy Shake on Tea.’


In 1922, Gilda Gray joined the Follies and performed her famous shimmy in a number called ‘It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway.’ The song title alludes – in contemporaneous vernacular – to the growing popularity of black performers in the Broadway district of Manhattan. Gilda Gray sang about “pretty chocolate babies” who “shake and shimmie everywhere.”\(^97\) Apparently, however, everywhere still didn’t include the Follies; ‘It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway’ was performed by Gray and the white Ziegfeld chorus. The lyrics of the song imply that the shimmy has been brought to Broadway by black performers, but the staging of the song reveals an alternative reality – one in which the shimmy is brought to Broadway by white performers pretending to be black. The number involved a technologically advanced manifestation of blackface described in this manner by critic Gilbert Seldes: “…the scene fades and radio-lite picks out the white dresses of the chorus, the hands and faces recede into undistinguishable black. And while the chorus sings Miss Grey’s voice rises in a deep and shuddering ecstasy to cry out the two words, ‘Getting darker!’”\(^98\)

In 1927, the shimmy was implied by the title of Irving Berlin’s ‘Shaking the Blues Away.’ Once again, the movement is characterized as black. In this case, the song’s lyrics describe “darkies” shaking their bodies while “list’ning to a preacher way down south.”\(^99\) Singer Ruth Etting must have attempted her own version of the shimmy during her performance, but failed to win praise for her dancing. One critic felt that

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\(^98\) Gilbert Seldes, *The Seven Lively Arts* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1924), 141.
Etting sang “expertly” but also suggested that “Mr. Carl Van Vechten and other Abolitionists must have felt a little uncomfortable” with her physical rendering of the song.

The most notable shift in the methodology of appropriation is that between the early teens and the late teens, when whites began to retain more of the movements they borrowed and acknowledge the cultural roots of those movements. One contributing factor seems to have been the nature of the shimmy in contrast to the dances borrowed in the early 1910s. The Texas Tommy and the other ragtime dances it parented involved formulaic footwork, even in their original black form. As such, the dance steps could be used by whites with very little of the body movement and improvisation characteristic of the black version. The shimmy, however, was defined by the shaking of the torso. It would have been virtually impossible for white dancers to replicate the dance without such movements and without implicating the original black dance. For the shimmy to be appropriated, white New Yorkers had to be willing to extend the limits of acceptable physical expression. The changing methodology of appropriation therefore reflects a different attitude on the part of whites toward dancing.

Unfortunately, the attitude toward African-American culture remained largely the same as it had in the early teens. White dancers acknowledged the source of their dances and borrowed them with few if any modifications, but they still viewed the culture as inferior. ‘Shimmee Town’ and ‘You Cannot Make Your Shimmy Shake on Tea’ do not feature racial slurs in their lyrics, but the fact that dancing was staged with the former and

100 Percy Hammond, *New York Herald Tribune*, undated clipping from MCNY.
not the latter reveals the state of race relations in 1919. Outwardly, ‘It’s Getting Dark on Broadway’ demonstrates a growing acceptance of African-American performers in the Broadway community. Its lyrics, however, refer to African-Americans with derogatory language, and the number was staged like a blackface minstrel show. ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ strongly advocates the shimmy as a mode of personal expression, but its lyrics portray black culture in a largely primitive manner.

**Black and White in the Ziegfeld Follies**

These songs about social dancing are yet another manifestation of the topical nature of the Ziegfeld Follies. They reveal the popularity of different movement styles at different times, the gradually expanding definition of acceptable movements over time, and the different methods of appropriation used for different dances. They also suggest perceptions of African-American culture, increased interest in its expressions, and resistance to racially-integrated entertainments.

Dichotomies abound in the cultural framework surrounding social dancing in the teens and twenties. European-Americans were increasingly willing to look to African-Americans for cultural inspiration but are unwilling to recognize the culture as equal to their own. They experienced black culture but place strict limits on its integration into their lives. These same dichotomies are evident in the Follies, especially in the songs discussed in this chapter. Ziegfeld hired Bert Williams in 1910 without precedent and in spite of objection from some cast members, but he never hired any black dancers for his chorus. He bought music and choreography from a Harlem production, but he did not
employ any of its cast members to perform in the Follies. These dichotomies reflect Ziegfeld’s desire to please the public. He must have felt that the public was willing to accept certain types of social integration and not others.
CHAPTER 5

PATRIOTISM

The Great War and the Ziegfeld Follies

The United States entered the First World War in April 1917. On the first of May, the mayor of New York City issued an edict requiring that restaurants and nightclubs stop serving alcohol by one o’clock in the morning, limiting the pre-war penchant for all-night entertainment.\(^{101}\) In a *New York Times* article dated May 6, 1917, it was reported that the German press were mocking the social activity still prevalent in the United States, activity described to Germans as “limitless – six to seven balls a night; the women half naked, but covered with jewels, and the men’s pockets filled with money – as long as the munition factories keep going…” The report suggests that while this characterization is “in the main untrue,” it demonstrates “how the little things count in the war, and how quickly they travel, to become mountains built out of mole hills.” Moreover, the report suggests that the country “must bear its direct share of the great war by restraining from any exhibition of profligacy or frivolity.”\(^{102}\)

\(^{101}\) “All Broadway Sad As 1 a.m. Lid Goes On,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1917.

Such attitudes meant nothing to Ziegfeld. The Follies had always been exhibitions of profligacy and frivolity and they retained their extravagant character during the war years. “For fear some one will think that he has adopted a policy of retrenchment because of the war,” wrote a critic for *The New York Times* upon seeing the 1917 production in its out-of-town tryout, “Mr. Ziegfeld calls attention to one novelty, a chiffon scene in which the chiffon alone cost $3,000.”¹⁰³ The Follies addressed the war not with subdued simplicity but with star-spangled spectacle. While previous Follies productions had featured patriotic songs, the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1917* featured an unprecedented display of national militaristic pride in its Act I finale.

After a tableau in which the ride of Paul Revere was represented by a man riding a white horse on a treadmill, the figures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln appeared. Then a troop of maidens in costumes more artistic than historic drilled with true Ned Wayburn precision before a painted eagle that fairly screamed while a frock-coated actor representing President Wilson reviewed them. The orchestra played “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and over the heads of the standing audience a huge American flag that canopied the auditorium was unfolded. A scenic tableau in which by an optical illusion a fleet of our battleships seemed to steam through the night up to the very breakwater of the footlights, growing in size with their approach, ended the spectacle.¹⁰⁴

The combination of past and present political figures described here is not unique to the Follies; in examining popular songs of the World War I period, Timothy Scheurer has observed that “songwriters consistently make the point that the doughboys are the new patriots with a direct link to their mythic forebears.”¹⁰⁵ The metaphorical use of precision dancers and powerful visual effects, however, was particularly Ziegfeldian.

The Ziegfeld Follies of 1918 featured an even more extended Act I finale; it consisted of so many songs and effects that it was described in one review as a “succession of finales.”\textsuperscript{106} The scene opened with Allyn King’s performance of ‘Since the Men Have Gone to War’ followed by Frank Carter’s rendition of ‘I’ll Pin My Medal on the Girl I Left Behind.’\textsuperscript{107} The female chorus then performed ‘We’re Busy Building Boats’ and ‘Aviator’s Parade.’ The scene concluded with a “Yankee Doodle Dance” by Marilyn Miller, a female color guard parade described as the “Allied Color Bearers United” and a Ben Ali Haggin tableau entitled “Forward Allies.”\textsuperscript{108} The scenic effects of the 1918 finale were no less elaborate than those used in the 1917 production. One critic reported that “a whole trench was built” for ‘I’ll Pin My Medal on the Girl I Left Behind.’\textsuperscript{109} ‘Aviator’s Parade’ involved “an army of feminine aviators” who marched around the stage in an elaborate bit of choreography.\textsuperscript{110}

Amidst such spectacle, one expects to find songs filled with patriotic sentiment, popular war slogans, and political propaganda. Such songs are indeed found in the wartime productions of the Follies. ‘Can’t You Hear Your Country Calling,’ the song which opened the elaborate Act I finale of the 1917 production, is a salient example. The title expresses the sentiment of the song; war is here and your country needs you. Some


\textsuperscript{107} ‘Since the Men Have Gone to War’ was eventually moved to Act II. A program dated June 18, 1918 (MCNY) lists it in the Act I finale, but a program dated July 29, 1918 (Joseph Urban Collection, Columbia University, Box 16, Folder 8) lists it in Act II, Scene 19.

\textsuperscript{108} Another revision to the finale was made sometime between June 18 and July 29; the latter programs lists “Forward, Allies” as the opening tableau of Act II.

\textsuperscript{109} Unidentified Clipping, MCNY.

\textsuperscript{110} Unidentified Clipping, MCNY.
songs, however, go beyond generic expressions of wartime patriotism. They reflect broader social movements which coincided with the war. These songs, which serve as the focus of this chapter, suggest that the war ultimately facilitated the women’s movement but hindered race relations. Women were praised for performing what was deemed to be their patriotic duty and recognized for their contributions to the war effort. In contrast, African-Americans continued to face prejudicial treatment and a growing racial divide brought about by the re-conceptualization of the Civil War beginning in the late nineteenth century.

**Reinventing the Civil War**

When Union and Confederate soldiers gathered to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913, the chairman of the reunion spoke these words: “It matters little to you or to me now what the causes were that provoked the War of the States in the Sixties.” Such willingness to forget the causes of the Civil War reflects a desire to bring north and south back together at the expense of relations between black and white, for to forget the causes of the Civil War was to forget the reality of antebellum southern life. Forgetfulness led to reinvented visions of the antebellum south during in the 1910s, including D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*. The film, released in 1915, portrays the antebellum south as an idyllic paradise destroyed by the war rather than a society with objectionable practices which led to the war.

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Reconciliation between north and south is portrayed as a reestablishment of the racial hierarchy of the antebellum south, of its values and principles. In the words of Melvyn Stokes, “one thing which becomes very clear from the later part of the film is that the nation born from the renewed union of North and South is very much a white nation.”\[112\] Or, as Richard Dyer writes, “by the end of the film,…white identity as national US identity has been asserted in southern terms.”\[113\]

According to figures reported in *The New York Times* by the Liberty Theatre, *The Birth of a Nation* was seen by roughly one-seventh of the population of New York over the course of 45 week engagement, numbers which were unprecedented in the film industry at the time.\[114\] Some reacted negatively to the film; in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, a woman by the name of Annette Wallach Erdmann feared its portrayal of African-Americans would only “create prejudice against a race that has a difficult road to travel at best” and that the film revisited “the feelings of resentment and hatred that almost shattered our country a half century ago.”\[115\] Given its popularity with New York audiences, however, Erdmann’s viewpoint was probably – and unfortunately – not shared by many.

In the fall of 1917, Edgar Leslie and Harry Ruby wrote a song called ‘The Dixie Volunteers,’ a tribute to southern-born soldiers currently heading overseas to fight the Germans. “Just like their dear old daddies,” these “Southern laddies,” were “fighting men like Stonewall Jackson and like Robert E. Lee.” Seen as a wartime song, ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ simply recognizes the southern-born soldiers entering the First World War and acknowledges their military forefathers. In the cultural context of time, however, the song’s idealization of the antebellum south is significant. The song’s message is remarkably similar to the words of the Chairman of the Gettysburg reunion. Explicitly, the message minimizes regional division in the interest of the nation as a whole; implicitly, it ignores the racial division which continued to plague the country. The song does not articulate the view expressed in *The Birth of a Nation*, namely that the south was justified in its subjugation of African-Americans. It nevertheless fails to include them in its portrayal of national – and militaristic – reunification.

Soon after its composition, ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ won several war song contests sponsored by the Winter Garden Theatre, the Mt. Morris Theatre, and the Harlem Opera House. Its success as a war song indicates how strongly international events affected the conceptualization of the Civil War at the time. As Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary has demonstrated, external military conflicts that took place after the Civil War played a significant role in reestablishing a national agenda under which northerners and southerners could unite. In her own words, “combat against a new enemy laid the basis

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117 *Variety*, October 26, 1917.
for southern support of national expressions of heroism, while expansion in war allowed the North to bask in the might of the Union.”¹¹⁸ This may help to explain why southern nostalgia flourished as much as it did between the Spanish-American War and the First World War, even in northern cities such as New York. By bringing together soldiers whose fathers and grandfathers fought on opposite sides of the Civil War, external military efforts facilitated a reunification based on northern acceptance of the south.

When Eddie Cantor interpolated ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ into the Ziegfeld Follies of 1917,¹¹⁹ he may have drawn greater attention to the racial implications of its nostalgia for the antebellum south. Cantor is known to have appeared in blackface for at least a portion of his performance in the 1917 production,¹²⁰ and may very well have appeared in blackface while singing ‘The Dixie Volunteers.’ If he did, the racial overtones of the song would have been greatly amplified. On its own, the song describes the antebellum south in only the most general manner; a blackface performance of it would clearly have implicated the racist treatment of African-Americans in that culture.

Cantor’s rendition of ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ is far from the only Follies performance to reveal the complexity of race relations in the early twentieth century. It is, however, a striking example of how strongly race relations were affected by the

¹¹⁸ Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, 58
¹¹⁹ Cantor interpolated ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ into the Follies sometime between November 16 and November 30. On November 16, Variety reviewed a vaudeville performance in which Cantor sang “‘The Dixie Volunteers’ and the ‘Baby’ number he does in ‘The Follies,’” implying that the former song was not yet part of his Follies routine. On November 30, however, Variety ran an advertisement for the publishers of ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ thanking Ziegfeld for adding their new song to his Follies production.
¹²⁰ Reviews of Cantor’s performance in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1917 attest to his appearance in blackface; see Variety, June 15, 1917 and New York Times, June 17, 1917.
struggle for national identity, especially during the First World War. This popular wartime march presents its own reinvented version of American history, one which ignores the causes of the Civil War and proclaims the international prowess of a superficially reunited nation.

**Women, Suffrage, and the War**

American women were granted the right to vote in 1919, not long after the end of the First World War. The timing with which women were given the right to vote, not only in the United States but also in England and Germany, suggests that the war may have played a significant role in the suffrage movement. During the conflict, women were called upon to serve their country in numerous capacities, whether as nurses, as women who filled jobs left by men serving in the military, as family members providing support to their loved ones, and as soldiers. The right to vote has been understandably construed by some as an act of gratitude for what women did during the war, an act of recognition that their patriotic contributions were substantial. Even so, Sara Martin warns that the war may not have been as powerful a force as one might think, at least in the Western world at large. New Zealand, Australia, Finland, and Norway all granted women the right to vote prior to the First World War. Denmark, Iceland, Holland, and Sweden did so during the war years even though these countries were not involved in the conflict. Moreover, France and Italy did not bestow voting rights on women until after the Second World War in 1945.121

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The extent to which women’s contributions to the war effort specifically influenced the American government in its decision to grant women the right to vote is difficult to ascertain. The suffrage movement had already gained considerable strength in the years leading up to the war. As noted in the third chapter, the suffragette was already being characterized as a mainstream part of American society, as an example of modern femininity, in 1917. Moreover, songs from the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1918* do not articulate a causal relationship between the First World War and the passing of the nineteenth amendment. They do, however, suggest that the war was at the very least conducive to the women’s movement. They suggest that women were appreciated during wartime and that their various contributions were viewed as patriotic.

It is both interesting and significant that songs from the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1918* portrayed women in different types of patriotic roles during wartime. ‘Since the Men Have Gone to War’ probably described the various jobs performed by women when large numbers of men went into the military. Unfortunately, extant copies of the song have yet to be found and the specific contents remain a mystery. In ‘Aviator’s Parade,’ women were dressed as fighter pilots, moving about the stage with all the precision of military men. Though probably meant to be metaphorical, this number nevertheless portrayed women in the armed forces. Both of these songs situate women in traditionally masculine roles, not only a reality of wartime but also another indication that Ziegfeld’s definition of femininity was not dependent upon women’s social roles. He was perfectly willing to portray women performing men’s jobs as long as they appeared pretty while doing so.
‘I’m Gonna Pin My Medal on the Girl I Left Behind’ situates its female character in a more traditional wartime role, that of loving sweetheart to a soldier overseas. Even so, it portrays the woman as unusually strong and brave. The soldier feels that his sweetheart has endured more difficulty than has he and is therefore more deserving of national honor than is he. It is doubtful that Irving Berlin wrote the song using the soldier’s medal as a metaphor for the right to vote. Nevertheless, Berlin conveys a general message; women should be honored on a national scale, for their personal support facilitated the war at the most fundamental level.

These songs portray women not only as strong and capable but also as decidedly American. As rendered by white performers in the Follies, such portrayals suggest as much about national identity as they do about femininity.\footnote{For a full discussion of the race and femininity in the Follies, see Linda Mizejewski, \textit{Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema} (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 109-135.} They demonstrate how white women were being increasingly accepted as full-scale American citizens while African-Americans of both genders continued to be left out. Ziegfeld may not have used the phrase “Glorifying the American Girl” until 1922, but his wartime productions defined American femininity several years earlier. She was white, middle-class, and beautiful.
Defining a Nation

Les Cleveland has suggested that war songs, as part of a broader wartime popular culture, exploit “every possible sentiment from nostalgic love of country to the platitudes of nationalism and whatever collective efforts might be made to mobilize resources for the war effort.” As Cleveland also states, “the social function of this cultural production is to integrate the nation and reinforce its solidarity.” The wartime songs of the Follies exemplify this function, and they suggest that not everyone was being integrated into the new American identity forged by the First World War. The solidarity between northern and southern whites was reinforced in such a way that excluded African-Americans from the process and in some cases demonized them. This new identity included women, but only white women.

Some songs published during the First World War suggested different, more inclusive images of American national identity. In 1918, M. Witmark published a song by Val Trainor and Harry De Costa entitled ‘When the Good Lord Makes a Record of a Hero’s Deed, He Draws No Color Line.’ The song, dedicated to the African-American musician and military bandleader James Reese Europe, recognizes the contribution of African-American soldiers, not only to the First World War but also to the Spanish-American War and to the Civil War. The fact that a song such as this could be published suggests that some individuals included African-Americans in the new American identity. Even so, it was probably not the most common view. Ziegfeld was inclined to choose songs he felt would have a broad appeal with his audiences. As such, he must

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have believed that songs such as ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ and ‘I’m Gonna Pin My Medal on the Girl I Left Behind’ – and the American identity they suggest – would have been well-received. Indeed, they were.
CHAPTER 6

“MUSICAL” COMEDY

Comic Song

Fanny Brice, Bert Williams, and Eddie Cantor sang comic songs every time they appeared in the Follies. Though song was not their only mode of comic performance, their reliance on it suggests that they understood its unique comic potential. Music enabled these comedians to play to their respective strengths. For Fanny Brice, song enhanced her inherently physical humor. Part of her comical appearance resulted from the juxtaposition of regular musical phrases with her awkwardly contorted body. For Bert Williams, song provided a rhythmic language in which he could communicate with perfect comic timing. His use of syncopation drew attention to key words. For Eddie Cantor, song facilitated both the actions and words of the characters he portrayed. He relied upon both syncopation and vocal techniques to emphasize important words in his lyrics, and the physical mannerisms he employed were an outgrowth of these lyrics.
Fanny Brice

Fanny Brice was a master of physical comedy. From exaggerated facial expression to awkward physical movements, Brice consistently made her audiences laugh by using her body as her primary comic tool. Her physical techniques were useful in sketch comedy as well as comic song performances, but the latter provided Brice with a special opportunity to add another dimension to her humor. Physical awkwardness can be funny without sound of any kind, but the juxtaposition of music with physical awkwardness provides two levels on which humor can exist. One level is the disjunction between various parts of the body which are put in opposition to one another by awkward movements. The other level is the disjunction between the bodily movements and the music.

Brice juxtaposed physicality and musicality in a number of her Follies song performances, but nowhere is the dichotomy clearer than in her musical parodies of ballet. In a performance captured on film, Brice demonstrates an understanding of how to make her movements as humorous as possible based on their relationship to the music. She does not move in an unmusical manner; instead, she flows with the music in an awkward manner. Brice appears dressed in a traditional ballet costume – leotard, tights, and tutu. She makes little attempt, however, to carry her body in the manner of a ballerina. At an appropriate interlude in her singing, Brice begins to dance. She rises to her toes and begins to turn around slowly, alternating her feet in a characteristic bourrée movement well-coordinated with the music. At the same time, however, her knees are

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124 This film clip has been partially reproduced in the 2004 PBS documentary entitled *Broadway: The American Musical*, directed by Michael Kantor.
bent strongly creating an awkward bodily line. Her arms, like her feet, flow in rhythm with the music, but they also lack the grace of a well-trained ballerina. They are overly active, almost flailing. Brice’s body is therefore simultaneously coordinated with and in opposition to the music. She moves in rhythm, but she does not project the expected image of a ballerina.

It is the contrast between her ability to clearly demonstrate movements associated with ballet in coordination with the music and her failure to perform them grace fully which ultimately makes the song performance funny. Had Brice failed to evoke ballet as strongly as she did through her costume, lyrics, and approximated ballet postures, her movements could not have been seen as clever mockery. Similarly, if she had failed to coordinate her movements to the music, her lack of physical grace would not have been as humorous. Complete ineptitude is rarely as comical as partial ineptitude.

Given the feathered headpiece Brice wears in the film clip, this performance was most likely rendered as part of a song entitled ‘The Dying Swan,’ one of three ballet parodies Brice performed in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1916. She seemingly performed both ‘The Dying Swan’ and ‘Becky is Back in the Ballet’ as part of her specialty act.125 Both songs were written especially for Fanny Brice by Blanche Merrill and had been part of Brice’s vaudeville routine prior to their inclusion in the Follies. Though visual evidence

125 An announcement in Variety on June 16, 1916 indicates that two songs written by Blanche Merrill, ‘Becky is Back in the Ballet’ and ‘If We Could Only Take Their Word,’ were “now being sung by Miss Brice in Mr. Ziegfeld’s splendid production at the Amsterdam Theatre, New York City.” A review of the production in the same issue of Variety lists two different song titles as being part of a specialty act “in one” by Fanny Brice: ‘The Hat’ and ‘The Dying Swan,’ also by Blanche Merrill. ‘Nijinski’ was part of the opening number of Act II, as indicated in a program dated July 3, 1916.
of how Brice performed ‘Becky is Back in the Ballet’ is lacking, the song’s lyrics provide strong evidence that Brice used movements similar to those captured on film. ‘Becky is Back in the Ballet’ tells the story of a ballerina who “gets herself dizzy and falls on her face.” She is nevertheless hopelessly devoted to her career as a dancer. Surely Brice would have played upon these lyrics with her movements.

In contrast to ‘The Dying Swan’ and ‘Becky is Back in the Ballet,’ ‘Nijinski’ was not a solo feature for Brice in the Follies. It was part of an entire parody scene about the Russian dance troupe known as the Ballet Russes. Vaslav Nijinski, the leading male dancer of the troupe, was a primary target. Carl Randall portrayed him in a parody of Le Spectre de la Rose; Fanny Brice sang the aforementioned ‘Nijinski,’ a number described by one critic as “an unblushing song that makes capital out of certain inescapable mannerisms and winds up with a whole stage of Bunthorne like Nijinskis, who were wildly applauded last night.”126 One can only imagine exactly how Brice and her male cohorts in comedy moved during the song. The critic suggests the clarity with which Nijinski’s “inescapable mannerisms” were performed; at the same time, Brice and the other dancers must have modified them in a manner that made them humorous. Given her performance choices for ‘The Dying Swan,’ it seems likely that Brice and the other dancers performed exaggerated versions of Nijinski’s mannerisms synchronously with the music. In any case, the response to the number suggests an equally delicate balance between grace and awkwardness, the original and the parody, the physical and the musical.

Bert Williams

Bert Williams was the first African-American cast member of the Ziegfeld Follies. His name was well-known in New York by the time he entered the Follies in 1910. He had been a part of numerous African-American theatrical productions, including *In Dahomey*. He was also an important figure in the early years of the recording industry, having released a surprising number of hits for someone known primarily as a stage performer.

Of all the songs Bert Williams performed in his career, none was more popular or more strongly identified with the comedian than ‘Nobody.’ Williams even lamented the effect of the song’s success on his career: “Before I got through with ‘Nobody’ I could have wished that both the author of the words and the assembler of the tune had been strangled or drowned or talked to death. For seven whole years I had to sing it.”\(^{127}\)

Williams himself was the assembler of the tune; Alex Rogers was the author of the words. In ‘Nobody,’ Williams portrays the downtrodden protagonist which came to define his stage persona. Nobody soothes his “thumping, bumping brain.” Nobody offers him something to eat when he’s hungry. The presence of such unfortunate characters in many of his songs stems from what Williams felt was one of the strongest sources of comedy. “The sight of other people in trouble is nearly always funny,” he said. “The man with the real sense of humor is the man who can put himself in the

spectator’s place and laugh at his own misfortunes. Indeed, as Williams admitted in a 1918 interview, “nearly all of my successful songs have been based on the idea that I am getting the worst of it.”

It is not known whether Williams ever performed ‘Nobody’ in the Ziegfeld Follies; programs often did not list the songs he performed as part of his specialty act. There is a striking similarity, however, between ‘Nobody’ and ‘Constantly,’ a song Williams performed in his Follies debut and which received more positive comments from the critics than did any other songs performed by Williams that year. Each phrase in the verses of ‘Nobody’ begins with essentially straight rhythms. The Gotham-Attucks sheet music from 1905 is written in 6/8 with quarter-eighth-quarter-eighth patterns in each measure, but Williams’s recorded performance is closer to 4/4 with slight variations in rhythm brought about by his combination of speaking and singing. The only distinct and strongly articulated example of syncopation comes at the end of each phrase. It coincides with Williams iteration of ‘Nobody.’

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128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
When life seems full of clouds and rain, and I am filled with naught but pain, who soothes my thumping, bumping brain?

Nobody!  

‘Constantly’ exhibits an identical rhythmic pattern, at least in Williams’s recording of the song. The sheet music published by Jerome Remick in 1910 doesn’t indicate any syncopation coinciding with the word ‘constantly,’ but Williams pauses before speaking it just as he does in the recording of ‘Nobody.’

As a prize fighter once I thought I’d try, I fought a man they called Kid Nye, Dat Man he sho’ did find my eye constantly.

The title words – ‘nobody’ and ‘constantly’ – also appear at the ends of phrases in the chorus of each song. In most instances, Williams continues to syncopate the onset of these words. Even when he begins the word on the downbeat, he employs a melodic form of syncopation by scooping into the written pitch, not reaching that pitch until some

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131 Alex Rogers and Bert Williams, ‘Nobody’ (New York: Gotham-Attucks, 1905).  
point after the downbeat. In ‘Constantly,’ as in ‘Nobody,’ Williams’s use of syncopation, particularly as it contrasts with the monotonous rhythmic setting of the other lyrics, is essentially the equivalent of comic timing in a spoken sketch or monologue. What makes these songs effective as comedy lies not just in the words themselves but in how they are rhythmically spaced, or timed. Williams was uniquely responsible for the timing of the words. Despite the differences between the published sheet music and Williams’s recordings, both emanated from the same source; Williams was composer and performer for both ‘Nobody’ and ‘Constantly.’

As both songwriter and singer, he blended the relaxed rhythms of speech with the more formal patterns of song. He was able to draw particular attention to the words ‘Nobody’ and ‘Constantly’ with a simple syncopation because this formally executed rhythm contrasted with the casually spoken rhythms used for much of the remaining text. A writer for The Soil describes Williams’s prowess with syncopation in particular: “He can linger over and slowly leave the syncopated notes with an expression of time which it is impossible to indicate in the notes themselves.”

Eddie Cantor offered a similar characterization of Williams’ vocal style in his first autobiography: “He had a unique

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133 Tim Gracyk compares ‘Constantly’ to ‘Nobody’ for their mutual use of “one- or two-word catchphrases.” ‘Unexpectedly,’ ‘Somebody,’ and ‘Not Lately’ are also mentioned by Gracyk in his discussion. Gracyk suggests that each of these songs, including ‘Constantly,’ was an effort on Williams’ part to “repeat the success of ‘Nobody.’” See Tim Gracyk and Frank Hoffmann, Popular American Recording Pioneers: 1895-1925 (New York: The Haworth Press, 2000), 382.

134 “Bert Williams,” The Soil (December 1916), 22.
way of rendering songs, injecting his talk between rests and catching up with the melodic phrase after he had let it get a head start. His knack for rhythmic timing was inherent and has never been excelled.”

Eddie Cantor

According to Eddie Cantor, he was in the habit of performing every song while “running up and down the stage” at the time when Irving Berlin provided him with ‘You’d Be Surprised.’ Cantor credited Berlin for suggesting that he stand still and give a more understated performance for this song. “Eddie, for this one you don’t have to move,” Berlin reportedly said. “You don’t have to get the song over, it’ll get you over.” Berlin was accurate in his estimation. The song was a success for Cantor when he performed it in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1919, presumably in the unanimated manner suggested by Berlin. According to an advertisement in Variety, the Prince of Wales said “he never laughed more heartily in all his life than when he heard Eddie Cantor in ‘Ziegfeld Follies’ sing Irving Berlin’s comedy sensation, ‘You’d Be Surprised.’”

Berlin’s suggestion to Cantor that he needn’t do much to incite laughter indicates the composer’s confidence in the song’s inherent humor. Variety’s Sime Silverman agreed; in his review of Berlin’s own cabaret performance of ‘You’d Be Surprised’ in

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137 Variety, November 28, 1919.
October of 1919, he suggested that each verse was “full of punch lines.” According to Berlin, his song about a man whose sexual prowess is hidden beneath a quiet, reserved demeanor was designed as comedy both thematically and musically.

Every line in the lyric was written with the conscious effort to build it up to a chorus, in which the title was to be repeated again and again, each repetition of ‘You’d be surprised’ carrying with it that ‘punch’ of unexpectedness which plays so important a part in humor. Then, to give added emphasis each time to the delivery of the title line, I stopped the singer for a full beat the instant before he uttered the line. And finally I tried for still more emphasis by sticking into the music an instrumental ‘bang’ as the singer paused a beat.

Berlin’s use of syncopation prior to the words ‘you’d be surprised’ demonstrates the same musical analogue to comic timing apparent in Bert Williams’ renditions of ‘Nobody’ and ‘Constantly.’ As Berlin argues, this syncopation delays the gratification of hearing the catchphrase and draws attention to it through musical means. Further evidence of the inherent humor of ‘You’d Be Surprised’ lies in the successful performance of the song by performers other than Cantor. When Irving Berlin’s publishing company released the song in 1919, the cover alluded to Cantor’s performance of it in the Follies, but George Jessel’s rendition for the Shubert Gaieties and Lew Cooper’s version for Oh! What a Girl were also noted.

‘You’d Be Surprised’ attests to the relationship between Cantor and his most successful comedy songs for the Follies. Cantor relied on songs with inherently funny lines and catch-phrases, material which could be effectively delivered in any number of ways by any number of performers. This is not to suggest that Cantor didn’t add

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138 \textit{Variety}, October 10, 1919.
139 Irving Berlin, as quoted in Frank Ward O’Malley, “Irving Berlin Gives Nine Rules for Writing Popular Songs,” \textit{American Magazine} (October 1920), 244.
\end{flushright}
dimension to his material; indeed, Cantor delivered ‘You’d Be Surprised’ with what he referred to as “special slurs and peculiar inflections,” techniques which distinguished his performance from those of other singers and gave the song his own humorous touch. This is evident in his 1919 recording on Emerson 10102. Cantor employs a unique vocal technique for the phrase “there’s a Devil in his eye” in the chorus. His voice maintains a singing tone, but he articulates the words without distinct pitch. This contrasts musically with the more conventional singing style he uses throughout most of the song, thereby reinforcing the humorous meaning of the lyric. Irving Berlin syncopated the beginning of the phrase, most likely because he considered it a punch line that deserved the kind of treatment used for the title catchphrase. Cantor’s singing style drew still further attention to the line by way of his vocal interpretation.

Even when Cantor was “running up and down the stage” during a song performance, he often relied on musicality as a component of his comedy. ‘That’s the Kind of a Baby for Me,’ a song Cantor performed in his first Follies, the Ziegfeld Follies of 1917, was described by one critic as a “stage song,” which suggests the kind of physically animated Cantor recalled using prior to 1919. The song, however, also includes a number of cleverly written lyrics. The title itself is the biggest punch line, as

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141 The original recording has been reproduced by the Pearl label of Pavilion Records in a four volume series entitled Music from the New York Stage.
143 Variety, June 15, 1917.
evident in this line from the first chorus: “The other evening in a cabaret we spent.
When I saw the check I thought it was the rent, but when the waiter came she simply
signed her name – That’s the kind of a baby for me!” The line is not syncopated here,
but Cantor drew attention to it through his unique brand of vocal inflection.

Music as a Comic Device

Music was one of many comic devices in the arsenals of Fanny Brice, Bert
Williams, and Eddie Cantor. Far from the sole source of humor in their performances, it
nevertheless contributed significantly to their comedy. The physicality of Brice’s ballet
parodies could have been funny without song, but they were undoubtedly more comical
with it. Bert Williams clearly understood the principles of comic timing apart from song;
incorporating them into song, however, demonstrates his understanding of musical timing
and its relationship to comedy. The vocal inflections of Eddie Cantor demonstrate his
understanding of how to perform a song with a musical sense of humor. The comical
potential of music is evident in their song performances.

CHAPTER 7

GENE BUCK

Gene Buck

Channing Pollock once suggested that *Hamlet* without Hamlet “would have been a perfect and complete thing compared to a *Follies* without Gene Buck.” Pollock’s sentiment was echoed in the words of a writer for *The New York Times* who in 1923 proclaimed Buck to be “almost as important a factor in the Ziegfeld productions of the past decade as the producer himself.” Indeed, Buck brought a number of talented individuals into the Ziegfeld fold including comedians Will Rogers and Ed Wynn, tenor John Steel, and set designer Joseph Urban. Moreover, he wrote lyrics for more than 50 songs of the Follies between 1913 and 1931.

After beginning his artistic career as an illustrator of sheet music covers, Buck moved on to lyric writing in the early 1910s and soon after came to know Ziegfeld. A song he wrote with Dave Stamper entitled ‘Daddy Has a Sweetheart (and Mother is Her Name)’ was reportedly due to be performed by Lillian Lorraine in the *Ziegfeld Follies of*

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1911. The song was cut before the Follies premiere, but Buck had nevertheless begun a working relationship with Ziegfeld. Indeed, so had Dave Stamper, who continued to collaborate regularly with Buck on songs for the Follies. Buck also produced songs for the Follies with Louis A. Hirsch, Raymond Hubbell, Jerome Kern, Victor Herbert, and Rudolf Friml.

As the most prolific lyricist for the Follies, Gene Buck is an essential figure. Some of his collaborations have already been mentioned in other chapters: ‘Nijinski’ (1916), ‘Tulip Time’ (1919), ‘Shimmee Town’ (1919), and ‘It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway’ (1922). These songs, like those discussed more fully in this chapter, exemplify the nature of Buck’s writing and, indeed, the musical content of the Follies at large. They exhibit the fundamental musical character of the Follies. They are conventional in theme and style, but well-crafted musically and clever in their social commentary.

Buck’s career with Ziegfeld also exemplifies the collaborative process by which the songs of the Follies were most often conceived.\(^\text{148}\) Collaboration among numerous individuals was the creative methodology of the Follies. Buck’s lyrics had to be coordinated not only to another person’s music but also to set designs, costumes, and the

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\(^\text{148}\) It seems mostly likely that Buck wrote his lyrics to music which was already composed. Not only was this a common practice in songwriting at the time, the musical rather than poetic character of Buck’s lyrics suggests as much. According to Ira Gershwin in his 1959 publication *Lyrics on Several Occasions*, most of his lyrics “were arrived at by fitting words mosaically to music already composed,” and therefore “any resemblance to actual poetry, living or dead, is highly improbable.” Instead, Gershwin’s lyrics follow the musical content produced by the composer. Buck’s lyrics suggest a similar collaborative process.
themes set forth by Ziegfeld for each annual production. His songs demonstrate his ability to collaborate in this multi-dimensional manner. His lyrics are remarkably musical, and they also correlate specifically with the topical theme or sentimental scene for which they were written.

**Topical Songs**

Gene Buck’s topical songs for the Follies fall into two categories. In some instances, the topical humor is based on events familiar to all New Yorkers and even makes use of general themes applicable to the topic. Songs such as the aforementioned ‘Nijinski’ and ‘Shimmee Town’ exemplify this approach. The dance trends which served as the inspiration for these two songs would have been well-known to most of New York. In other songs, the topical humor is geared more specifically to Broadway audiences. ‘It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway,’ despite its general description of the shimmy, would have been most relevant to audiences already familiar with the increasing number of black performers in the Broadway district.

‘Hello, Frisco,’ a collaborative effort between Gene Buck and Louis A. Hirsch, is perhaps the most remarkable example of the general type of topical commentary in the Follies. It was also, seemingly not by coincidence, one of the greatest popular successes of the entire Ziegfeld Follies series. In October 1915, Columbia Records released an instrumental dance version of this “lively, cheery excerpt from that merry mélange, ‘The Follies of 1915’” which had, in their estimation, already “soared to greater heights of
popularity than any other product of musical New York’s big Summer frolic.”\textsuperscript{149} A little more than two years later, \textit{The New York Times} described the song as the “popular highmark” of composer Louis A. Hirsch’s career, a song with “so lilting a melody that it became one of the great nuisances of the age.”\textsuperscript{150} The song has indeed been memorialized as one of the biggest hits of 1915 in volumes such as \textit{Variety Music Cavalcade} and ASCAP’s \textit{Hit Tunes}.\textsuperscript{151}

‘Hello, Frisco’ was written in response to the recent innovation of the transcontinental phone call. It was performed against a backdrop of a map of the United States with “the larger cities on the straight line from New York to Frisco marked off.”\textsuperscript{152} More generally, however, the song expresses the frustration of someone who desperately wants to be connected with his sweetheart. By carefully choosing and situating his words, Buck endowed Hirsch’s music with this frustration. For example, the opening bar of the verse features a four note motive which repeats. To complement this pattern, Buck’s lyric – “Hello, Central!” – contains four syllables which align with each statement of the motive. Together, the repeating motive and lyric convey the urgency of the song’s protagonist to make his telephone call, an urgency which continues in the third bar when the music of the opening bar returns to be accompanied by the words “Kindly hurry, kindly hurry.” Notably, Buck provides a lyric without repetition when the entire four bar

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{New York Times}, October 26, 1915.  
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{New York Times}, January 6, 1918.  
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Variety}, June 25, 1915.
phrase repeats in second half of the verse. The lyric – “Frisco is her name she’s at the Golden Gate; Central, it’s a shame for me to have to wait” – reiterates the music’s urgency without monotonous repetition of the same musically mimicking device.¹⁵³

In the chorus, Buck provides another lyrical analogue to the musical line which suggests frustration. The chorus begins with two four-bar statements of “Hello, Frisco, Hello,” each of which features a single melodic note for the latter half of the entire phrase. The melodic rhythm is therefore relatively slow, and Buck’s lyrics consequently suggest happiness and calm on the part of a protagonist who thinks he is connected. The melodic rhythm then speeds up, however; the phrase length is shortened to two bars and the long duration at the end of the phrase disappears. For these phrases, Buck writes the words, “Don’t keep me waiting, it’s aggravating.” Finally, when Hirsch’s music reaches a rhythmic climax in bars thirteen and fourteen, including a return to the opening musical motive, Buck’s protagonist exclaims, “Why can’t you hurry, Central, you’re so slow!”

Buck’s coordination of words to music and message in ‘Hello, Frisco’ is remarkable. He builds on Hirsch’s musical structure to paint both a specific, topical story and a general mood. Some of his phrases are cliché; “your voice is like music to my ear, when I close my eyes, you seem so near” is hardly an inventive lyric. Nevertheless, Buck’s rhythmic use of language and his combination of the topical and the universal in his theme likely contributed to the song’s overwhelming popularity outside the context of the Follies.

‘Chu Chin Chow,’ written by Buck and Dave Stamper for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1917*, exemplifies Buck’s ability to creatively comment on life within the Broadway community. The name of the song was taken from an English musical production based on the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. Written by Oscar Asche and Frederick Norton, the original *Chu Chin Chow* would not premiere in the United States until October of 1917. Nevertheless, reports of its success abroad and advance announcements of its American performance were sufficient to inspire the staff songwriters of the Follies. With the premiere of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1917* in June, Buck and Stamper’s ‘Chu Chin Chow’ was hailed in *Variety* as “the best production number, musically…whether written in America or England.”

The exoticism prevalent in the United States and Europe in the early twentieth century is readily apparent in ‘Chu Chin Chow.’ The “orient” was at the time perceived so vaguely that while the familiar tale of Ali Baba is situated in the Middle East, Chu Chin Chow is characterized as Chinese. Moreover, the song warns against the possible intrigue of this individual: “Beware of Chu Chin Chow, take care he’s coming now.” Ultimately, however, it seems to be the English production of *Chu Chin Chow* rather than any nonwestern culture which is the object of allusion in the Follies song. Not only is he “coming now,” he is depicted as the “Chinese crook” who “appears in plays” and achieves “great success each night.” Such phrases clearly refer to the English musical production as much as the fabled Ali Baba and exemplify the specific kind of musical commentary in the Follies based on being a part of the Broadway community. One

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154 *Variety*, June 15, 1917.

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reviewer was critical of Buck and George V. Hobart – who collaborated with Buck on the libretto that year – for writing a Follies production in which “almost all of their comedy has only a Broadway application.” Buck was not deterred, however. In 1921, former Follies dancing star Marilyn Miller was playing the lead character in Ziegfeld’s first book show entitled Sally. Not only was the production a success which made a star out of Marilyn Miller, the show itself was about a chorus girl from a small town who becomes the biggest name on Broadway. The Follies production that year featured a song by Buck and Stamper entitled ‘Sally, Won’t You Come Back to Our Alley’ in which the protagonists plead with their beloved Sally to return to them despite her fame and success. The analogy was more than obvious, at least within the Broadway community.

Not surprisingly, ‘Chu Chin Chow’ and ‘Sally, Won’t You Come Back to Our Alley’ did not enjoy the popularity of ‘Hello, Frisco.’ They lacked the necessary universality to appeal to a broad public. Yet the very specificity of these songs suggests that the Follies catered not only to New Yorkers but to those New Yorkers likely to attend other performances on Broadway. Moreover, their reliance on Broadway-based humor suggests that Ziegfeld – or at least those who worked with him – had a sense of humor about the Broadway community.

Buck’s ability to write topical songs with both wide-ranging and specific applicability reveals his creativity as a lyricist. Moreover, he understood that universal topics were enhanced by their relevance to something more specific and that topics geared to a smaller audience could be based on some broader principle. ‘Hello, Frisco’

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tells a specific story which is generalized by expressions of personal frustration in both words and music. In the opposite manner, ‘Chu Chin Chow’ relies heavily on the general prevalence of exoticism in order to articulate the more specific message directed to the theatrically savvy.

**Sentimental Songs**

The sentimental ballad was popular well into the twentieth century. As such, it was a staple of the Follies and of Buck’s songwriting career. He and Dave Stamper produced not only the aforementioned ‘Tulip Time’ but also ‘When the Right One Comes Along,’ ‘Nobody but You,’ and ‘Just You and I and the Moon.’ Buck also wrote several sentimental ballads with Louis A. Hirsch, his collaborator on ‘Hello, Frisco.’ The pair produced ‘I Left Her on the Beach at Honolulu,’ ‘Hold Me in Your Loving Arms,’ and ‘I’ll Be a Santa Claus to You.’ It is perhaps most significant, however, that Buck wrote sentimental songs with Victor Herbert and Rudolf Friml, composers known as much for their European-style operettas as for their American-style popular songs.

‘Love Boat’ was written by Gene Buck and Victor Herbert in 1920 to be performed by John Steel, the tenor who had won great acclaim for his performance in the 1919 edition of the Follies where he sang Irving Berlin’s ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody’ and Buck and Stamper’s ‘Tulip Time.’ Like many of the waltz songs popular in the early twentieth century, Victor Herbert’s music for ‘Love Boat’ consistently emphasizes the downbeats of each bar and frequently uses the third beat as an anacrusis to the downbeat.
of the next bar. Only occasionally, for the sake of rhythmic interest, does Herbert write a note articulation which coincides with beat two. It is this rhythmic structure which gives the waltz its lilting character.

In order to enhance this character and not interfere with it, Buck had to pay special attention to the syllabification of his text. For example, Buck chose to use “I am” and “I’m” in a single musical line from the verse in order that the words would flow with rather than against the music. In each case, the expression serves as an anacrusis to the beat. “I am” is used at the beginning of the phrase when a two-beat anacrusis fits; “I’m” is used in the middle of the phrase when a two-beat anacrusis would have resulted in an articulation on each of the three beats, destroying Herbert’s lilting melodic rhythm.

Also evident in ‘Love Boat’ is an elevated level of sophistication in Buck’s language. Phrases such as his opening lines of the verse – “When the twinkling stars are coming in the purple afterglow, and the soft guitars are strumming, Gondoliers are humming low” – are filled with sentimentality but are nevertheless elegant.157 Moreover, Buck demonstrates a highly developed use of rhyme. Consider the opening lines of the verse already quoted; “strumming” and “humming” are rhymes which fall in unconventional places in both text and music. Buck seemingly chose this elegant language – which is markedly different than that used in many of his topical songs – because it suited both the music and the mood of Herbert’s song.

Buck’s lyrics for the ‘Bring Back My Blushing Rose,’ a song he wrote with Rudolf Friml for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1921*, are equally elegant and well-suited to the music. “I wander and dream in Roseland,” sings the protagonist, “in search of the rose I adore.” Admitting that “the Pink, and the White, and the Yellow delight,” she nevertheless longs for another, saying “there’s one I can’t find as of yore.”\footnote{Gene Buck and Rudolf Friml, ‘Bring Back My Blushing Rose’ (New York: T.B. Harms, 1921).} As can be gleaned from this opening lyric, the rhyme scheme is irregular. As with ‘Love Boat,’ Buck use rhyme in accordance with the music; in this case, he follows the agogic accents in Friml’s music, some of which fall on ends of phrases and others which do not. For example, Buck rhymes the ends of the second and fourth lines, but not the first and third. Instead, he uses an internal rhyme within the third line and no rhyme in the fourth. This rhyme scheme repeats for the second four lines of the verse. In the first half of the chorus, Buck rhymes the ends of first and second lines and then rhymes the end of the third line within the fourth line. For the final half of the chorus, Buck only uses rhyme at the ends of the first and second lines; the song concludes with an exclamation of the song title rather than with a well-rhymed phrase. All of the rhymed words are situated on prolonged durations, whether at the ends of lines or in the middle of phrases. As such, Buck’s lyrics mimic Friml’s musical phrasing.

The elegance and musicality of Buck’s lyrics in these songs demonstrates his facility with the sophisticated style of these composers. Though the songs of Herbert and Friml are no less sentimental than those produced by countless other songwriters of the
time, they rely on a more sophisticated musical language than was common in popular song at the time. Buck found words suited to their musical lyricism, another indication of his talent as a songwriter.

**The Art of Collaboration**

Buck’s compositions for the Follies demonstrate his willingness to write in different styles, his understanding of Ziegfeld’s concept for the Follies, and his ability to be creative and flexible at the same time. Buck seemingly thrived in an environment which other writers found frustrating. Channing Pollock, for example, wrote in his memoirs of a day soon after he and Rennold Wolf had been contracted to write sketches for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1915*. When the pair of writers encountered Harry B. Smith, a librettist for several early editions of the Follies, Pollock thought at the time that Smith’s expression suggested bitterness. A few months later, however, Pollock felt it must have been pity.\(^{159}\)

Pollock’s own experience working with Ziegfeld may well have influenced his high opinion of Buck and his significant contribution to the Follies. Indeed, the Follies could have been written and produced without Buck, but they would have been markedly different. His ability and willingness to collaborate with so many different individuals produced the musical backbone of the Follies, the topical and sentimental songs which gave the Ziegfeld revues their fundamental character. His creativity and musicality exemplify the Follies.

Ziegfeld and His Follies in the 1920s

By the mid-1920s, the Follies were facing greater competition on Broadway. Some revues of the twenties, such as George White’s Scandals, featured exceptional music – by George Gershwin, in this case – while the staff songwriters of the Follies struggled to produce hits. Other revues, including Earl Carroll’s Vanities and Artists and Models, tried to outdo Ziegfeld in their opulent displays involving the female form; the rivalry sparked increased debate over nudity on the stage. Finally, plot-driven pieces of musical theatre were becoming increasingly popular. Ziegfeld himself had already successfully produced the book shows Sally (1920) and Kid Boots (1923).

In the mid-1920s, critics sensed that Ziegfeld was aware of how the theatrical business was changing and how he needed to adapt his Follies productions accordingly. In a review of the 1924 production, a critic for Variety suggested that Ziegfeld “aimed to mold it along the lines of musical comedy, having in mind the success of ‘Sally’ and ‘Kid

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Boots.”  The book was ultimately removed after the first performance, but the attempt to make the Follies into a book show is significant. Some critics suggested that it was money – rather than the popularity of plot-driven productions – that initiated Ziegfeld’s attempt to make changes in the format of the Follies. “Flo Ziegfeld says that he’s through with producing shows of the Follies order and that this one will be the last,” wrote a reviewer for Theatre Magazine in December 1923. “No doubt he realizes that, with ever mounting costs, he cannot hope to surpass or even equal his earlier efforts, the shows that made his trademark famous.”  Money may have been a factor, but Ziegfeld was not one to be easily swayed by finances alone. He was, for instance, reputed to spend thousands on expensive undergarments for his chorines simply because he felt it changed the manner in which they walked. As such, it seems more likely that his attempt to insert a plot into the 1924 Follies production was based on his own success with book shows.

Faced with increasing competition from both revues and book shows, Ziegfeld knew he had to present something a little different. His attempt to turn his Follies into a book show in 1924 was unsuccessful, so he attempted instead to introduce a greater degree of musical cohesion in his revue. He did this by hiring Irving Berlin as the sole songwriter for his 1927 production, perhaps not only because Berlin had written songs for the Follies on numerous previous occasions but also because he had successfully written complete musical scores for the Music Box Revues earlier in the 1920s. Although the Music Box Revues did not feature the opulent spectacle of the Follies, they exemplified

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161 Variety, July 2, 1924.
162 Theatre Magazine, December 1923.
the kind of musically-unified revue Ziegfeld desired. Ziegfeld certainly did abandon his love of spectacle in favor of the more visually modest *Music Box Revues*, but he may very well have been striving to imitate their musical cohesion.

It is difficult to judge the success of Ziegfeld’s attempt at a cohesive version of the Follies. Cantor’s performance demanded so much from him physically that the show had to close after a few months. Reviews of the production were largely favorable, however, especially with respect to Irving Berlin’s music. The production’s music garnered the attention of one of the first critics to see the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1927* during its tryout in Boston. “Perhaps it was Mr. Irving Berlin’s score, more than any other thing, which informed the energies of all these several entertainers.” Variety’s out-of-town critic was slightly less enthralled, suggesting that the Berlin score shaped up well, but was “not very strong in popular numbers.” Nevertheless, he suggested that ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ “seemed to please the steppers,” ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ would “probably be the best sheet number,” and ‘It All Belongs to Me’ was “a snappy thing” which had been “jammed in during the last day or two of rehearsals.”

When the Follies returned to New York for its Broadway debut, critics continued to comment on the show’s music. *The New Yorker* reported that “the music is reminiscent of everything haunting in the last ten years (‘Blue Skies’ being prominent) and retains the best features of each.” Brooks Atkinson, then critic for *The New York Times*, agreed, singling out ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ and ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ as 

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164 *Variety*, August 10, 1927.
165 *The New Yorker*, August 27, 1927.
songs that represented Berlin “in the sentimental and wistful style of his best compositions.” A critic for *The New York World* described the same two numbers as song hits “which probably will be echoing to the roof gardens of another summer.”

*Variety* again gave the least enthusiastic review: “There are a couple of tunes that may be plugged into becoming fairly popular, but the score lacks a ‘natural’ with it doubtful any audience will remember one particular melody at exit time. It’s all in the Berlin vein and nice, although minus the brilliancy which this composer has put on display for some of his previous production efforts.”

Notably, these critical responses evaluate Berlin’s songs apart from their performance in the Follies; they describe them according to their musical characteristics. Though not unprecedented in the history of the Follies, such comments from critics are unusual. Songs of the Follies were most often reviewed according to how they were sung or staged, not according to how they were composed. Moreover, the collective manner in which the songs of the 1927 production were described by these critics is exceptional. Critics often made a general comment about the quality of the music for a given Follies production, but they rarely characterized the group of songs as though it were conceived as a whole, as though it were representative of a composer’s style. Of course, prior to 1927, such was not the case.

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167 *New York World*, undated clipping, MCNY.
One would expect that the collective songs of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1927*, having been written by a single songwriter, would exhibit a degree of stylistic similarity unprecedented in the Follies. Berlin’s songs, however, are strikingly similar. They seem to share more than a common creator; they share themes and techniques. They suggest that Berlin may very well have conceived as these songs as a whole, as a more than a group of songs suited to the Ziegfeld Follies. They suggest that Berlin may very well have set out to create a musically-unified version of the Follies, a production suited to the changing tastes of Broadway audiences.

**Creating Cohesion**

One of the things Berlin did to facilitate a group of musically similar songs was to make them thematically similar. As I noted in the fourth chapter, ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ refers to and illustrates the nature of the shimmy. It is more generally, however, a song about how music – and dance – can alter the mood of a person. This same theme is expressed in ‘It’s Up to the Band,’ another song from the production; the protagonist proclaims that his or her mood is entirely dependent upon what the band is playing at the moment. Other songs from the 1927 Follies suggest that love is the powerful force that changes mood. ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ and ‘Rainbow of Girls’ are songs about infatuation with one’s object of affection, songs which suggest both lyrically and musically that love alters those who feel it. These thematic relationships are reinforced with musical underpinnings. Jazz-based rhythms and melodic blue notes are most evident in ‘Shaking the Blues Away and ‘It’s Up to the Band,’ two songs about music’s
effect on mood. ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ and ‘Rainbow of Girls’, songs about love’s effect on mood, rely more heavily on melodic and harmonic construction for their expression.

In his seminal 1972 work on American popular song, Alec Wilder describes ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ as “an extremely good rhythm song.”

It’s a strong, driving tune with three things about it that immediately impress. First is the concentration on the sixth interval of the scale, in this instance, c; second, the rhythmic device of the fifth and sixth measures; and third, the astute use of four half notes in the seventh and eighth measures to set up an unbusy contrast to the main strain.\(^\text{169}\)

Two of the three elements Wilder describes as most noteworthy are rhythmic elements in the second half of the opening phrase of the chorus. And these elements share an interesting relationship with those in the first half of the opening phrase. Bar five articulates precisely the same rhythm as do bar one and bar three. On this third iteration, however, Berlin extends the rhythmic idea across the bar line. The alternation of eighth notes and quarter notes is prolonged, which essentially creates a two bar statement out of the rhythm used for bar one and for bar three.

Berlin has not only extended the previous rhythm; he has also generated a new one. This sense of newness lies largely in how the syncopations are situated within the metrical structure of the two bars. In bar five, the first and third beats coincide with note onsets; the syncopations occur around beats two and four. In bar six, however, the syncopations occur around beats one and four. The first beat is syncopated as a result of the tied note beginning in bar five. Beats two and three coincide with note onsets, and

the eighth note on beat three creates syncopation on beat four. Berlin thus uses simple
rhythmic relationships and a regular formal pattern – ABABAABB, in which the A bars
are syncopated and B bars are not – that feels more complex.

Moreover, the harmonic underpinnings and the melodic emphasis Berlin places
on the sixth scale degree in these two bars – noted by Wilder – are well-coordinated to
the extension of the rhythm and related to its sense of newness. In bars five and six, the
alternation between ii7 and V7 offers harmonic movement but also contributes to the
repetitious, unresolved feeling in the forward movement of the rhythm. The melody,
hovering around the same sixth scale degree with which the song began, in this case c5,
offers an effective level of musical ambiguity. C has been a primary tone in the melody
even though it is not part of the tonic triad. In bars five and six, c remains a primary tone
in the melody, but is now also part of the ii7 and V7 chords voiced in the harmony.
Because the ii7 and V7 chords seek resolution, the c simultaneously steadies and
destabilizes the passage. As a melodic center, it grounds; as a harmonic tone, it pushes
forward.

Like Wilder, Gerald Mast emphasizes the significance of the seventh and eighth
bars, but for a different reason than the temporary respite they provide from the
pervading syncopation in the preceding four bars. Mast notes Berlin’s use of blue notes
in these two bars, as well as their absence in the rest of the song. “Despite its title, this
song remains entirely in the major except for the final four notes of its first A section and
much of its release, when the blue notes return to stick like burrs." Mast characterizes ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ as the “obverse of ‘Blue Skies,’” which Berlin wrote around the same time. Both utilize blue notes as musical symbols of blue feelings. And in both songs, Berlin uses them sparingly in order to emphasize the songs’ message that troubles can easily go away, whether through a bodily movement or through a positive outlook.

As in ‘Shaking the Blues Away,’ Berlin’s greatest triumph in ‘It’s Up to the Band’ is his innovative use of rhythm. The melody and harmony of the chorus of ‘It’s Up to the Band’ are seemingly the result of the jazz-inspired rhythmic framework. Berlin emphasizes the flatted seventh scale degree and employs chromaticism throughout, both of which seem more expected than jarring in the context of the rhythm. The lyrics, which suggest simply that a person’s mood is affected by musical style, are likewise more remarkable for how well they suit Berlin’s rhythms than for their imagery.

The melodic rhythm of the chorus creatively situates syncopation in and amidst straight and dotted rhythms. The first bar emphasizes the ‘and’ of beat two through syncopation; the second bar contains only dotted rhythms. This pattern is repeated in bars three and four. Bar five begins as does bar one, but ends differently. Bar one features an eighth note on the ‘and’ of two which is tied to a dotted quarter; the remaining eighth note of the bar is simply an anticipation leading into the next bar. Bar five, however, contains an eighth note on the ‘and’ of two which is tied to another eighth, allowing for another eighth note and another quarter note before the end of the bar. Bar six then begins with another eighth note followed by a quarter note. The effect is largely

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similar to the effect created by Berlin in the fifth and sixth bars of ‘Shaking the Blues Away,’ discussed above. The rhythmic pattern of short – long, in this case eighth – quarter, is repeated three times from the middle of bar five into the beginning of bar six. However, the sense of repetition is negated by the uneven nature of the pattern and the manner in which it is situated within the metrical framework. Instead of sensing repetition or regularity, the listener hears the line as a new and catchy rhythm.

For the B section of this AABA chorus, Berlin continues to employ syncopation in carefully juxtaposed ways. His continued emphasis on the ‘and’ of beat two suggests continuity with the A sections. But instead of alternating rhythmic patterns in alternate bars, he uses the same pattern of syncopation to emphasize the ‘and’ of beat two in two sets of adjacent bars – seventeen and eighteen, twenty-one and twenty-two. This provides the necessary contrast between the A and B sections.

‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ is a particularly salient example of Berlin’s ability to express emotion with melodic and harmonic devices. The song begins with a brief eight-bar introduction which iterates the melody of the chorus and establishes the primary key area of F major. As soon as the voice enters, Berlin plays with how strongly F major is stated. F major chords anchor significant points in the accompaniment throughout the verse and the chorus, but the voice does not reach a point of full resolution until the end of the first phrase of the chorus. The verse consists of largely descending melodic lines that begin on f5 that arrive no lower than a4; the chorus begins on and continues to hover around a4 until the resolution to f4 in the seventh and eighth bars.
By utilizing F chords in the accompaniment but delaying the statement of F in the voice, Berlin expresses harmonically the emotional uncertainty inherent in the lyrics. During the verse, the protagonist expresses nothing but anxiety. But the chorus begins with a supposition about what might be causing that anxiety. Beginning the melody at a4 – a tone within the harmonic triad but not at its root – enables the song to simultaneously articulate both the accuracy of the protagonist’s supposition and the doubt that still remains in his mind. Even the resolution to f4 in the seventh and eighth bars of the chorus is quickly replaced by another jump elsewhere in the harmonic triad – to c5. The f4 is not strongly iterated in the voice again until the final resolution of the chorus, suggesting the protagonist’s final arrival at the conclusion that love is indeed the cause of his emotional state.

Not surprisingly, Berlin’s melodic treatment of the lyrics works with his harmonic treatment of the same. Hovering around a4 in the first phrase of the chorus accomplishes more than delaying the harmonic resolution; it generates a melodic line that further exaggerates the combination of anxiety and uncertainty suggested by the lyrics. While Berlin’s rhyme scheme is hardly ingenious – it involves the words ‘ooh,’ ‘you,’ ‘blue,’ ‘do,’ and ‘who’ – the prolongation of the tones on which each of these words is sung creates a sense of connectedness, a sense that these words are related to one another and to the protagonist’s troubled emotional state. The third phrase of the chorus expectedly departs from this pattern to create the familiar AABA form, but the overall shape of the chorus is defined by its sense of continuation, a sense that reflects the continuous struggle of the song’s protagonist to determine the root of his feelings.
‘Rainbow of Girls’ features an unusual melodic contour and evocative harmonic movement for a popular ballad. The chorus begins in a typical fashion for a song written in G major; the melody features a whole note on the fifth scale degree, in this case d4, and the accompanying harmony is a simply-voiced statement of the tonic triad. In the second bar, however, the melody moves up stepwise to d#4 and then to e4. This chromatic movement in the melody is echoed in the accompaniment; the downbeat of the bar features a diminished triad in the accompaniment that quickly resolves, along with the melody, to a subdominant harmony, in this case a C major triad. The melody then jumps up a sixth to c5, a leap that emphasizes the subdominant harmony, but nevertheless produces an unusual melodic phrase. At the end of bar two, Berlin uses another diminished harmony, mixing in what would be a naturally occurring iiº in G minor, but which demands an accidental in the G major key used here. From there, the melody and harmony follow a more typical path, concluding the phrase by emphasizing commonly used scale degrees and resolving to the tonic.

This 8-bar A phrase repeats itself, but incorporates additional chromaticism in its latter half. Bar twelve, instead of employing the ascending line of b4 to c5 to d5 used in bar four of the first A phrase, wobbles from b4 to a#4 and back to b4 only to reach up to c#5 on the downbeat of bar thirteen. The reiteration of c#5 on beat three of bar fourteen eventually leads to d5 in the melody in bar fifteen. But the accompaniment does not offer a resolution to the dominant harmony until bar sixteen. The accompaniment stated along with the melodic iteration of d5 on the downbeat of bar fifteen is b minor. It changes to a
chromatic diminished harmony on beat three, and not until the next downbeat that the expected D major harmony is articulated. Even then, it is voiced with the fifth of the triad in the bass.

The B phrase uses chromaticism a little more sparingly. It is part of anticipatory ascending lines of eighth notes in the melody and of the modulation back to G major, arguably more expected applications of chromaticism in popular song than those exhibited in the A phrases. There is still, however, an array of harmonies present in the B phrase as it modulates back to the original tonic. For example, in addition to E minor and C major chords, the harmonic movement includes a C augmented triad in bar twenty-one and a half-diminished seventh chord in bar twenty-three.

Given Berlin’s ability to conceive of non-musical entities in musical terms, it is probable that his incorporation of chromaticism is related to the lyrics of ‘Rainbow of Girls.’ Chromatic movement seems to be the musical embodiment of how Berlin envisions the feeling of being up in the clouds, “chasing a rainbow of girls.” The chromaticism creates whimsy reflective of the song’s fantastical subject. In any case, it adds character to a song otherwise grounded in AABA form and expected harmonic resolutions.

**Nat Shilkret’s Medley**

As already noted, Berlin’s songs for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1927* have not been preserved collectively in print. They have, however, been recorded as a medley. In October of 1927, just two months after the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1927* opened at the New...
Amsterdam Theatre on Broadway, Nat Shilkret and the Victor Orchestra released a recording entitled “Ziegfeld Follies – Medley.” Follies performers Franklyn Baur and the Brox Sisters were also featured on the recording. The medley is divided into A and B sections, one on each side of the record. The A medley begins with a lively orchestral version of ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ followed by a harmonized rendition of ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ by the Brox Sisters. The orchestra then offers a brief instrumental version of ‘Jungle Jingle,’ a song that originally featured the Brox Sisters in the Follies. Next, Franklyn Baur performs ‘Rainbow of Girls,’ his solo number from the production, and the A side concludes with a return to the orchestral version of ‘Shaking the Blues Away.’ The B medley begins with ‘It All Belongs to Me,’ Eddie Cantor’s musical feature in the show, sung here by the Brox Sisters together with Franklyn Baur. This is followed by a solo piano version of ‘Tickling the Ivories,’ a song that was performed by Ruth Etting on stage. ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ is then rendered as a solo by Franklyn Baur, and ‘It’s Up to the Band’ is presented by the Brox Sisters. Like the A medley, the B side returns to that with which it began, closing with an instrumental version of ‘It All Belongs to Me.’

The Nat Shilkret recording illustrates the musical and thematic cohesion between the songs with exceptional clarity. The transitions between songs are markedly smoother than those in a medley of tunes from the Ziegfeld Follies of 1917 released on Victor 35651. In the 1917 medley, performers from the Victor Light Opera Company begin by

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171 Victor 35845. See Tim Gracyk, Pages from The Talking Machine World, Volume 3 (1997). Two songs from the production – ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ and ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ – were recorded by the Paul Whiteman orchestra one month earlier on Victor 20885.
singing a chorus of ‘Chu Chin Chow.’ When the chorus ends, the only transition to the
next selection – Jerome Kern’s ‘Just Because You’re You’ – is a brief pause. In contrast,
the opening orchestral version of ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ in the 1927 medley ends
with a modulating extension of the final syncopated melodic figure ending with a smooth
entry into ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You.’ Similar techniques are also used in the other
transitions; some feature more extended passagework to connect the songs. While the
smoothness of these transitions is attributable to the talent of arranger – perhaps Shilkret
– the commonalities between Berlin’s songs must have facilitated the creation of this
particular medley.

Berlin’s songs for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1927 share common themes and musical
techniques. ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ and ‘It’s Up to the Band’ suggest that music and
dance can affect a person’s mood; they are rhythmically based songs which share a
common syncopation technique and utilize jazz-inspired scale degrees and harmonies.
‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You’ and ‘Rainbow of Girls’ suggest that love is equally if not more
capable of changing emotions; they are ballads with a typical AABA refrain in which
resolutions to the tonic are carefully delayed. These similarities may reflect nothing more
than a common methodology in Berlin’s songwriting process at the time, but it seems
more likely that he sought to produce a particularly poignant degree of similarity in these
songs for the sake of musical cohesion.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

The chapters of this study function in much the same manner as did songs of the Follies. They are related to each other, but also disparate in their specific topics. It therefore seems appropriate to draw things to a close not with a single conclusion but with several conclusions about the Ziegfeld Follies and the songs performed therein. I hope to have demonstrated not only the importance of songs to the Follies but also the importance of the Follies to our understanding of American popular culture, to the history of American musical theatre, and to the history of American popular song. They provide a wealth of information, especially when considered in the proper light.

The songs of the Follies embody the essential qualities of the revues in which they were performed. They were, like the Follies, lighthearted and fun for the audience, yet they are also carefully and cleverly conceived. Their frivolous spirit should not be mistaken for a lack of attention to detail. They also exemplify the high standard Ziegfeld set for his productions; they were composed and performed by some of most-talented artists of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the variety of topics and styles represented in the songs of the Follies exemplify the Ziegfeld aesthetic – a combination of social commentary, sentimentality, glamour, and fun.
Songs of the Follies also demonstrate how these revues were and continue to be embedded in American popular culture. To a large extent, our understanding of the Follies and of these songs depends upon our willingness to look beyond their preservation in popular memory and uncover their original performance and reception. Our understanding also depends upon how clearly we see Ziegfeld and his audiences in how American popular culture was depicted in the Follies. The beliefs about gender, race, and national identity represented in the Follies were an outgrowth of Ziegfeld’s desire for public appeal; they were the ones thought by Ziegfeld to be most widely accepted at the time, the ones most likely to appeal to the largely white, middle-class audiences who patronized the Follies. In his depiction of American popular culture, Ziegfeld constructed a social identity for the Follies and for the American public that received them.

The Ziegfeld Follies represent more than an early stage in the development of the integrated Broadway musical or in the golden age of American popular song. They deserve the kind of full-fledged scholarly attention given to the musical stage works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Lowe, and Stephen Sondheim, for they also involve a creative combination of music, humor, visual display, and social commentary. Their songs merit the kind of study devoted to other popular tunes of the period, for they further illuminate the careers of well-known composers such as Irving Berlin and Victor Herbert and reveal the lesser-known talents of songwriters such as Gene Buck and Louis A. Hirsch. The Follies should be more adequately situated in the
scholarship of these fields, and it is my hope to have taken an important first step in doing so. Further research will undoubtedly bring more insight into the rich history of these revues and of American musical theatre at large.
Follies of 1907

One of the featured songs of the first Follies production was ‘Budweiser’s a Friend of Mine,’ or simply ‘Budweiser,’ composed by Seymour Furth and Vincent Bryan. Frank Mayne initially performed the song, taking on the persona of Mark Twain for his rendition of this light-hearted musical advertisement. According to one critic, it was “a bit raw and certainly not very entertaining, to hear Mark Twain singing ‘Budweiser,’ and obviously trying to make the song popular.” Perhaps it was for this reason that Mayne was rather quickly replaced by Charles J. Ross, who took over the role and the song by July 8, 1907.

‘Budweiser’ was far from the only musical number to change hands during the run of the production. A review in The New York Dramatic Mirror dating from July 8, 1907 applauds Emma Carus’ performance of ‘Handle Me With Care’ and ‘Salomy Jane.’ However, by September 2, 1907, the former song was being rendered by Nora Bayes and Harry Watson, Jr., and the latter song had disappeared from the program. The

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172 Unidentified clipping (NYPL, Baral Papers, Box 13, Folder 2).
July 8 review in *The New York Dramatic Mirror* also favorably mentions Dave Lewis’ performances of ‘Reincarnation’ and ‘I Think I Oughtn’t Auto Any More.’ By September, however, William Powers had taken over his role and his songs.

Grace Larue, appearing as Pocahontas, performed a song named for her character as well as another entitled ‘Miss Ginger of Jamaica.’ Mademoiselle Dazie had three dance features: ‘The Doll Dance,’ ‘Jiu Jitsu Waltz,’ and ‘La Kraquette,’ the last of which was one of numerous theatrical burlesques of the final dance in Richard Strauss’ *Salome*. Other published songs from the production include ‘Mother’s the Boss of Our House,’ ‘That’s How He Met the Girl,’ and ‘If We Knew What the Milkman Knows.’ Other songs listed in extant programs include ‘Ban Box Girl,’ performed by Nora Bayes when she entered the cast in the middle of the run; ‘I Want to Be a Drummer Boy,’ a finale for Act I; ‘In the Grand Old Sands,’ performed by Florence Tempest and the so-called ‘Bathing Girls;’ and ‘The Gibson Bathing Girls,’ performed by Annabelle Whitford and members of the chorus.

**Follies of 1908**

It was in the second production of the Follies that Nora Bayes introduced ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon,’ now a popular standard. But, as is discussed more fully in the first chapter, the song was most likely part of only for a few performances late in the production’s run. It was other songs that made the *Follies of 1908* a success in the eyes

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174 The song the critic calls ‘I Think I Oughtn’t Auto Anymore’ was published as ‘I Oughtn’t Ought to Any More’; this is the title listed as another song from the production on the published sheet music cover of ‘Miss Ginger of Jamaica.’ ‘Miss Ginger of Jamaica,’ written by Billy Gaston, was published by Shapiro in 1907.
of the critics. Nora Bayes’ rendition of ‘You Will Have to Sing an Irish Song,’ composed by Albert von Tilzer and Jack Norworth, was particularly well-received. *The New York Dramatic News* suggested that Bayes “scored a big hit” with this “beautiful ballad.”

The critic for *The New York Times* suggested that it was “possibly the song hit of the performance,” and the reviewer for *The New York World* described the song as “little less than a classic.” Bayes also received positive reviews for ‘Since Mother Was a Girl’ and ‘Rose-Rosetta.’

‘Take Me ‘Round in a Taxicab,’ written by Melville Gideon and Edgar Selden, was praised for the unique staging and costumes of Grace Leigh and members of the Ziegfeld chorus. The critic for *The New York Dramatic News* characterized the number, “in which about a dozen chorus girls appear dressed as taxicabs,” as a “beautiful thing” and a “surprise.” The reviewer for *The New York Times* similarly suggested that the number had “a novel and pleasing effect.” *Variety* implied that the “scanty costumes [with] headlights and signs of ‘to hire’ on their red tin flags brought out a real gasp” from the audience. A photo of the costumes worn has been reprinted in Stephen Burge Johnson’s *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatre, 1883-1942.*

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175 *New York Dramatic News*, June 27, 1908 (NYPL, Baral Papers, Box 18, Folder 19).
177 *New York World*, June 16, 1908. Clipping from MCNY.
179 Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), Figure 47.
A song performed by the English songstress Lucy Weston entitled ‘Fishing’ apparently offered the audience a rather risqué interpretation of an ordinarily mundane activity. According to one critic, Weston sang the song while dangling candy hearts from a fishing-pole so that they fell within reach of the front row. “Very amusing is Lucy,” wrote the critic, “but it seemed on the opening evening as though she won’t make New York like her London specialty of ditties with double meanings. The first verse, with a refrain that I can’t write out politely, was received in silence; the second started up a little laughter that was scared into silence by the sound of itself, and when she left there wasn’t sufficient applause to call her back.”

‘The Nell Brinkley Girl,’ composed by Maurice Levi, was a musical homage to the popular drawings of Nell Brinkley, drawings which had largely supplanted earlier images of womanhood by Charles Dana Gibson and his contemporaries. The song, performed by Annabelle Whitford, received positive reviews in Variety and The New York Dramatic News, and it was characterized by the critic for The New York Times as “a series of song pictures reproducing…the work of a popular illustrator, who draws beautifully fluffy young ladies, being artistic as well as pretty.” Levi also contributed a number entitled ‘Mosquito Song’ in which the chorus girls asked the audience, “Would you like to be stung?” The Times critic suggested that the audience response to these “glitteringly beautiful” women with soothing voices was “an unqualified affirmative.”

Unidentified clipping (NYPL, Baral Papers, Box 18, Folder 19).

For more on Nell Brinkley and images of womanhood in the early twentieth century, see Trina Robbins, Nell Brinkley and the New Woman in the Early Twentieth Century (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2001) and Martha H. Patterson, Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
The 1908 production also offered two musical parodies of recent operettas. A song entitled ‘The Candidate’ is characterized as a burlesque of ‘The Soul Kiss,’ and a number called ‘The International Merry Widow’ was obviously directed at the overwhelming response to the 1907 mounting of Franz Lehár’s work in New York. Other songs mentioned positively in reviews were Lucy Weston’s performance of ‘Be Good,’ Arthur Deagon’s rendering of ‘The Rajah of Broadway’ and a song entitled ‘Follow the Flag.’ Other songs mentioned in programs include ‘The Duchess of the Table d’Hôte,’ ‘Titles,’ ‘The Big Hats,’ and multiple dance features for Mademoiselle Dazie.

**Follies of 1909**

One of the greatest technical feats of the *Follies of 1909* was designed for a song by Gus Edwards and Matt Woodward entitled ‘Up, Up, Up in My Aeroplane.’ In celebration of the recent innovations in aviation, Lillian Lorraine was “seated in a tame airship, suspended from a track on the ceiling” in what *Green Book* critic Channing Pollock characterized as “perhaps the prettiest incident of the performance.”[^182] Sime Silverman of *Variety* also lauded the spectacle of the number, but found Lorraine’s singing to have a negative effect on it. “In the staging everything has been done for the number, but the girl set all such labor at naught through her very small and almost still

voice.”\textsuperscript{183} Even so, the number seemingly did not survive without her. By late November neither Lorraine nor ‘Up, Up, Up in My Aeroplane’ were on the Follies program.

Another song initially performed by Lillian Lorraine – ‘It’s Nothing But a Bubble’ by Maurice Levi and Harry B. Smith – also disappeared from the program with its star. Critics said little about the song or Lorraine’s performance of it, only that she may have been the inspiration for the title. Coyly critical of Lorraine, Silverman suggested that “perchance a librettist had named the song with an eye to sarcasm.”

Some of Lorraine’s musical material, however, was taken over by other performers. A song called ‘Linger, Longer, Lingerie’ became a feature for Annabelle Whitford, who, in the estimation of Variety’s Silverman, possessed “the best voice in the show” and should have been the one to perform ‘Up, Up, Up in My Aeroplane.’ ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me Dearie,’ originally performed by Lorraine, became one of Eva Tanguay’s numbers when she entered the 1909 production.\textsuperscript{184} According to the report of one critic, Tanguay and the Ziegfeld chorus appeared in baseball uniforms and pitched soft baseballs into the crowd while singing.\textsuperscript{185}


\textsuperscript{184} Lillian Lorraine appears on the sheet music cover for ‘Come On, Play Ball with Me, Dearie,’ issued by Gus Edwards’ publishing company in 1909. However, Eva Tanguay is listed as the soloist for the number in a program dated November 29, 1909. According to an announcement in The New York Times on July 7, 1909, Tanguay entered the cast at that time.

\textsuperscript{185} Unidentified clipping (NYPL, Baral Papers, Box 13, Folder 3). 116
Tanguay also inherited a song entitled ‘Moving Day in Jungle Town’ by Nat D. Ayer and A. Seymour Brown. The song, originally performed by Sophie Tucker in the production, was part of ‘The Jungle Scene.’ According to the *Variety* review, this scene was “the comedy hit of the show” and “the one bright spot in a piece lacking good comedy.” Silverman briefly describes the scene in which Teddy Roosevelt is depicted in an African veldt: “In the Jungle scene, Mr. Norworth as Kermit Roosevelt, and Harry Kelley as the Colonel, put over a number of laughs, helped by an assorted collection of ‘prop’ inhabitants.”

Like the 1908 production, the *Follies of 1909* included burlesques of opera and operetta. ‘I’m After Madame Tetrazzini’s Job,’ written by Gus Edwards, was a response to the popularity of Italian soprano Luisa Tetrazzini in her American performances sponsored by Oscar Hammerstein. According to Lester S. Levy, part of the humor of the song was situated in the fact that Tetrazzini was seemingly “impervious to physical ailments” and therefore rarely if ever in need of a replacement. Edwards’ song was part of a scene that parodied Hammerstein’s operatic productions, a scene which also included a song called ‘Mad House Opera.’ Originally performed by Nora Bayes and later taken over by Eva Tanguay, the song was described by *Variety*’s Silverman as “a deftly arranged medley, running from ‘rag’ to operatic.”

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186 Lester S. Levy, *Give Me Yesterday: American History in Song, 1890-1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975). Levy does not discuss the song in the context of the Follies; its presence in the *Follies of 1909* is indicated by its inclusion in theatrical programs and the mention of the Follies on the cover of the published sheet music.
Other songs mentioned in reviews include ‘Madam Venus,’ performed by Annabelle Whitford; ‘I Wish I Was a Boy and I Wish I Was a Girl,’ performed by Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth; and a finale entitled ‘The Greatest Navy in the World.’ The first of these still appeared on the program in late November and was still being performed by Whitford; the second song was also still on the program but was being performed by Eva Tanguay and Bessie Clayton. Other songs listed on the program from late November include dance features for Bessie Clayton and a number entitled ‘The Bathing Girls’ performed by Annabelle Whitford.

Follies of 1910

According to reviews, the most visually pleasing number of the 1910 production was ‘Swing Me High, Swing Me Low,’ in which Lillian Lorraine and several other female members of the cast sat and sang on lavishly decorated swings suspended from above the stage. The critic for The New York Times referred to the number as “a very lovely feature” in which the women “flew two and fro over the auditorium and the heads of star-gazers, while the girls by a series of cords manipulated a chime of melodious silver bells.”

A review in Leslie’s Weekly offers a similar description: “a swing song, with daintily gowned girls and flower-bedecked swings, with Lillian Loraine, the principle beauty in the cast, swinging out on a little track to the middle of the house over the heads of the audience, meets with appreciative applause.”

188 Leslie’s Weekly, July 7, 1910.
Fanny Brice’s rendition of ‘Lovie Joe,’ a song written by Joe Jordan and Will Marion Cook, was praised by multiple critics. The reviewer for *The New York Times* wrote that Brice “scored a hit” with the song thanks to her “eccentric facial expression and queer vocal interpolations.” *Variety*’s Sime Silverman offered a similar appraisal, suggesting that Brice “made a big hit with her own style of singing” in the number.\(^{189}\)

Critics for *Green Book* and *Leslie’s Weekly* compared Brice’s style to that of other vaudevillians, including Eva Tanguay and Dave Montgomery.\(^{190}\) Brice’s versions of Irving Berlin’s ‘Goodbye, Becky Cohen’ and another tune entitled ‘Grizzly Bear’ garnered less favorable reviews.

Bert Williams was well-received by the critics, but the only song he performed which garnered even mediocre reviews was ‘Constantly,’ a song written by Williams to the words of Alex Rogers. The other numbers he performed early in the run—‘The Black Cat’ and ‘Believe Me,’ according to the critic for *Leslie’s Weekly*—received largely negative comments. Whether in response to audience reactions or to keep his material fresh, Williams seemingly tried out other selections during the run. For instance, ‘I’ll Lend You Everything I’ve Got Except My Wife,’ written by Harry von Tilzer and Jean C. Havez, is not listed in extant programs for the 1910 production.\(^{191}\) It was, however,

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\(^{189}\) *Variety*, June 25, 1910.


\(^{191}\) ‘I’ll Lend You Everything I’ve Got Except My Wife’ is not listed in a program dating from June 20, 1910 or in one dating from January 2, 1911, when the Follies returned to New York after an autumn tour. Indeed, the June 20 program does not list any of the songs Williams performed during his specialty. The January 2 program lists both

Grace Tyson received positive reviews for her song performances, which included a “rag” – probably ‘The Yodeling Rag,’ mentioned by the Atlantic City reviewer for the same publication a week earlier – and a song called ‘Nix on the Glow Worm Lena.’ Bobby North’s singing, including ‘The Waltzing Lieutenant’ by Gus Edwards and a ditty entitled ‘I Can’t Sing That Top Note,’ was also well-received. A June 20, 1910 program lists several other songs by Gus Edwards, including ‘Mr. Earth and His Comet Love,’ ‘Don’t Take a Girl Down to Coney,’ and ‘I’m in Love with You.’ ‘Look Me Over Carefully (and Tell Me Will I Do)’ by Gus Edwards and Will D. Cobb does not appear on extant programs, but was published by Edwards as a song from the production.

Ziegfeld Follies of 1911

According to the critics, Bessie McCoy was blessed with the best musical material of the Ziegfeld Follies of 1911. In a production he described as generally lacking in good songs, Green Book critic Channing Pollock characterized McCoy’s rendition of ‘Take Care, Little Girl’ as “the best tune in the piece.” Other critics agreed, including the writer for Variety who indicated that “Miss McCoy received a

‘Constantly’ and ‘Believe Me,’ but includes ‘In the Evening’ and makes no mention of ‘The Black Cat.’

vociferous reception, when first appearing, singing ‘Take Care, Little Girl,’ with her graceful dancing to follow that.” The critic for *Theatre Magazine* praised McCoy’s skill rather than her material but nevertheless suggested that ‘Take Care, Little Girl’ was better than her other number called ‘Tad’s Daffydils.’

Bert Williams was once again well-received as a comedian, especially for his now famous poker pantomime. Reviews of his songs, however, were mixed. The critic for *The New York Times* suggested that his “collection of melodies” was “equal to any he has had” and that “he seems to have improved his heretofore almost perfect work.” But Channing Pollock considered his songs for the 1911 production “not quite up to the mark.” *Variety*’s critic agreed with Pollock: “other than the ‘Harmony’ song, neither of the other two is worth while for a singer of Bert Williams’ origination of method.” The ‘Harmony’ song to which this critic refers is ‘Dat’s Harmony,’ composed by Williams to words of Grant Clarke. One of the songs seemingly unworthy of Williams was Irving Berlin’s ‘Woodman, Woodman Spare That Tree.’ The song was published by Ted Snyder as having been performed in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1911*. Regardless of critical approval, Williams recorded it in 1913.

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194 *Variety*, July 1, 1911.
195 *Theatre Magazine*, August 1911.
196 Tim Gracyk has assumed that Williams introduced this pantomime in the 1914 production of the Follies following his performance of a song entitled ‘Darktown Poker Club.’ While Williams did perform such a song in the 1914 production and likely incorporated the routine as well, it is clear from reviews of the 1911 production that Williams had performed the bit prior to any association it may have gained with ‘Darktown Poker Club.’ See Gracyk, 383.
197 *New York Times*, June 27, 1911.
Fanny Brice’s songs for the 1911 production – ‘Ephraim’ and ‘Doggone That Chilly Man’ – were panned by the critics. Channing Pollock was perhaps the most gracious, indicating simply that ‘Ephraim’ was old material for Brice. The critic for The New York Dramatic Mirror wrote, “Fanny Brice was not so fortunate in her costume and no more fortunate in her song, ‘That Chilly Man.’” Like Pollock, the critic for Variety felt that the musical material for the entire show was relatively poor and the singers struggled even more because of the large size of the theatre. “Fanny Brice seemed to be hit the hardest,” he wrote, “or else she has given up ‘coon shouting.’ Both her songs needed that style of singing, particularly ‘Ephraim.’ Neither got over very well. ‘That Chilly Man,’ Miss Brice’s first number, had little to recommend it.”

A few other musical performances received mention in reviews. Pollock found Clara Palmer’s ‘The Widow Wood’ to have a “swinging melody,” and suggested that Walter Percival was able to showcase “his talent and his teeth in rendering ‘New York.’” The Times critic also noted Percival’s rendition of “a rousing song about New York.” The review in Variety singled out Fred Brown’s performance of ‘Whip-Poor-Will’ during the ‘New Year’s Eve on the Barbary Coast’ scene, but only as the best of a scene “with little doing.” Another negative review was extended to a song performed by Lillian Lorraine entitled “The Texas Tommy Swing.” Channing Pollock called the song, written by Val Harris and Sid Brown, an “uninspired ballad.”

198 New York Dramatic Mirror, June 28, 1911.
Ziegfeld Follies of 1912

‘Row, Row, Row,’ written by Jimmie V. Monaco and William Jerome, was performed by both Lillian Lorraine and Elizabeth Brice during the run of the 1912 production. Lorraine sang it early in the run, and her performance received largely positive reviews from the critics. The reviewer for The New York Times called it her “best individual number” and described it as having a “nice little lilt.” Variety’s critic simply referred to it as “a warm number.” The critic for The New York Dramatic Mirror predicted that the song, “as sung by Miss Lorraine,” would become popular, but it may have been Elizabeth Brice’s rendition of the song that ultimately brought the song to widespread public attention. She is listed as the performer for the song in a program dated December 9, 1912, and it was her name that was featured on the cover of the sheet music published by Harry von Tilzer. In any case, it is one of relatively few songs from the Follies to appear on multiple lists of popular hits from the early twentieth century, including ASCAP’s 50th Anniversary List of Hit Tunes and Variety Music Cavalcade.

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200 Variety, October 25, 1912.
201 New York Dramatic Mirror, October 23, 1912.
‘The Broadway Glide’ was the finale number of Act I. In the words of the critic for The Times, it involved “the entire Broadway population doing the turkey trot.” Channing Pollock wrote a remarkably similar description in his review of the production for Green Book Magazine: “Herald Square is shown to music, with every human being who crosses it indulging in the turkey trot.”

The songs of Bert Williams were favorably reviewed, or at least more favorably reviewed than much of his musical material for the 1910 and 1911 productions. The Times critic felt that he had “some good songs.” “In the best of them,” wrote the critic, “he described the conditions under which he could be induced to lend money to a friend.” This comment likely refers to a song entitled ‘Borrow from Me,’ which is listed on the cover of the sheet music for ‘The Broadway Glide’ as another published song from the 1912 production. The critic for Variety reported that Williams performed four songs including ‘My Landlady’ and ‘On the Right Road, Sister.’ The critic felt that the latter of these was Williams’ best and that his other songs – ‘Borrow from Me’ and ‘Blackberrying Today,’ a song written by Williams and published under the guise of the 1912 production – “amounted to little.”

Although other reviews did not mention it, comedienne Ray Samuel’s rendition of ‘I Should Worry and Get a Wrinkle’ was praised in Variety as the best song of the production. Also noting her performance of ‘Down in Dear Old New Orleans’ and “a ‘rube’ number,” the reviewer suggested that “she should have stopped after worrying, for

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204 Variety, October 25, 1912.
she was a big hit then.” The same reviewer also suggested that Bernard Granville sang too many numbers. He wrote, “[Granville’s] dancing was a riot, but the management [made] him sing too often.” Indeed, the December 9, 1912 program includes singing several features for Granville including ‘You got to Keep a’ Moving and Dance,’ ‘Dip, Dip, Dip,’ and ‘Beautiful, Beautiful Girl.’

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1913**

Nat M. Wills was the singing star of the 1913 production. *Variety* called his renditions of ‘New York, What’s the Matter with You?’ – also known as ‘Good Bye My Tango’ – and ‘If a Table at Rector’s Could Talk’ the “two best songs in the show.” Channing Pollock said nothing of the latter song, but singled out the former as one of four pleasantly memorable moments in the production. “This lyric,” wrote Pollock, “bewailing the closing up of all-night restaurants, has a chorus that runs:

Goodbye, my tango
Farewell to cabaret life;
Now I’ve got to go home when the curfew rings,
And do the grizzly,
Do the grizzly,
Do the grizzly with my wife.

Which is in doubtful taste, but funny.”

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205 *Variety*, June 20, 1913.
Pollock also enjoyed “a telephone number, with business, frankly pilfered from a one-act play at the Princess, and done by Elizabeth Brice under the title of Hello Honey.” Also applauded by the critic for Variety was Florence Nugent Jerome’s performance of ‘Katie Rooney.’ The review reported that the song “did very big” and that “Miss Nugent looked daintily pretty and sang very well.”

Nat M. Wills also performed a song entitled ‘That Ragtime Suffragette’ which portrayed a man faced with the stereotypical consequences of his wife’s political ambitions. However, it did not receive the positive response of his other numbers.

According to Variety, the number was “a cropper” and was “badly put on.” All of Jose Collins’ songs were panned as well. Channing Pollock reported that Collins performed six “soprano soli” throughout the performance, “each a little more deadly than the others.” Pollock did not name the songs, but they can be determined from a June 16, 1913 program and from publication information: ‘Just You and I and the Moon,’ ‘Everybody Sometime Must Love Someone,’ ‘Panama,’ ‘Sleep Time, My Honey,’ He’s So Good,’ and ‘Isle d’Amour.’ Pollock described one of these songs without mentioning Collins: “The finale of the first act, a ‘patriotic’ number called ‘Panama,’ suggests the ‘The Greatest Navy in the World,’” in The Follies of 1909.”

Other songs listed in the June 16, 1913 program include ‘Going There’ and ‘Without You,’ both performed by Elizabeth Brice, and ‘You’re Some Girl,’ performed by Nat M. Wills and members of the chorus. ‘That Honky Tonky Tune,’ ‘Rosemary Lee,’ and ‘You Must Have Experience’ were all published as songs performed in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1913.
Ziegfeld purchased two songs for his 1914 production from a Harlem production entitled *My Friend from Kentucky*: a romantic ballad called ‘Rock Me in the Cradle of Love,’ and a dance number entitled ‘At the Ball, That’s All.’ Both songs were written for the production by J. Leubrie Hill, who also served as director.207 ‘Rock Me in the Cradle of Love’ was borrowed early on in the run of the Ziegfeld production. Channing Pollock suggested in his review that it was “as negro [sic] as Bert Williams, full of curious cadences and eerie minors” and that such a song gained nothing by Rita Gould’s interpretation, which was “in the fashion of Twenty-eighth Street.”208 Notably, Pollock also mentions ‘At the Ball, That’s All,’ suggesting that Ziegfeld should have chosen it, “an infinitely more remarkable song,” instead of ‘Rock Me in the Cradle of Love.’ Ziegfeld did eventually acquire ‘At the Ball, That’s All;’ it was later published as a song from the production.

Bert Williams performed ‘I’m Cured’ in Act I of the 1914 production and at least three additional songs for his Act II specialty. Channing Pollock found his songs lacking. *Variety*’s critic, however, suggested that Williams “held up the show near the finale with two new numbers.”

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207 For more on these songs and their role in *My Friend from Kentucky*, see Thomas L. Riis, *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890-1915.*
One was ‘The Man That Wrote the ‘Vampire’ Must Have Known My Wife,’ and a poker game song, wherein, with the aid of a razor, Williams told how he had rewritten rules for the game. He finished here with ‘You Can’t Get Away From It,’ doing an imaginary tango, and only the music with the next full stage scene finally stopped the outburst.\textsuperscript{209}

One wonders if the poker game song to which the critic refers – ‘The Darktown Poker Club’ – was an attempt on Williams’ part to capitalize on the success of his poker pantomime.

Channing Pollock admired a duet entitled ‘Good-night’ in which “Miss Meyers, ably assisted by R. Merton Horne,” made “an excellent impression.” Another critic liked Miss Meyers’ other melodies, ‘Prunella’ and ‘Nothing to Wear,’ that latter of which was described as “a parody of Raymond Hitchcock’s song at another theatre.”\textsuperscript{210} That same critic also gave a favorable review to ‘The Futurist Girl,’ performed by Vera Michelena and the chorus. Perhaps the biggest flop of the production was Arthur Deagon’s rendition of ‘My Little Pet Chicken,’ in which one of the chorus dancers apparently appeared “on a real broiler, ready to be applied to the fire.” According to a reviewer, the audience “did not see the humor of the case at all and positively refused to laugh.” The reviewer continued: “This, to be sure, was a damper for poor Mr. Arthur Deagon, who has to sing the song, but it was a refreshing and deserved compliment none the less to the female sex in general.”\textsuperscript{211} Other songs listed in the June 8, 1914 program include ‘Be

\textsuperscript{209} Variety, June 5, 1914.
\textsuperscript{210} Unidentified clipping (MCNY).
\textsuperscript{211} Unidentified clipping dated June 2, 1914 (MCNY).

Ziegfeld Follies of 1915

Bernard Granville garnered adulation for his song performances in the 1915 production, especially for his duet with Ina Claire entitled ‘Hello, Frisco.’ The New York Dramatic Mirror reported that “Bernard Granville’s pleasingly aggressive personality was given a splendid opportunity in four song numbers, one of which, entitled ‘Hello, Frisco,’ is destined to become popular.”

Variety’s critic was a little less enthusiastic, but still complementary. He described ‘Hello, Frisco’ the best song of the production, a “catchy little melody sounding quite well,” with the qualification that it didn’t have “much competition” for such a designation. Granville also sang ‘My Radium Girl,’ which Variety characterized as the production number with the best staging, ‘We’ll Build a Little Home in the USA,’ and ‘A Girl for Each Month of the Year.’

Granville’s partner for ‘Hello, Frisco,’ Ina Claire, received largely positive reviews for her solo performance of ‘Marie Odile,’ a parody of Frances Starr’s portrayal of a nun named Marie Odile in a play produced by David Belasco. The reviewer for The New York Dramatic Mirror suggested that she “scored an emphatic hit in a remarkably truthful impersonation of Frances Starr, in which she sang plaintively of the trials and

tribulations of Marie Odile.” A writer for *Theatre Magazine* concurred, calling Claire’s performance a “very clever imitation of Frances Starr as Marie Odile.”

The critic for *The New York Times* wrote in more detail about the song:

> You should hear Ina Claire, as charming and accomplished as ever, doing a capital orchestral duet with Mr. Granville, and then coming out all alone as the novice from Mr. Belasco’s…Alsatian convent. It is distinctly a mischievous little lyric that she warbles with its refrain: ‘Oh, how sorry I feel for poor Marie-Odile’ and its further account of one ‘who knew all about religion and whose best friend was a pigeon’ and who ‘took off her hood and tassel and looked just like Mrs. Castle.’

‘Marie Odile was one of several song contributions to the 1915 production by Louis A. Hirsch; others were ‘I’ll be a Santa Claus to You,’ performed by Will West and ‘Hold Me in Your Loving Arms,’ performed by Helen Rook.

Bert Williams reappeared, singing ‘I’m Neutral’ as one of his songs. *Variety*’s critic suggested that the song, a humorous commentary on American neutrality at the start of World War I, was his best, though the other songs are not mentioned. A July 12, 1915 program suggests that Williams was revisiting ‘In the Evening’ by request, but it is uncertain how long the song remained a part of his specialty.

A number of other songs composed by regular Follies songwriters Dave Stamper and Gene Buck were published as having been performed in the 1915 production. ‘I Love to Be Loved’ and ‘Trilby’ are both featured in the New York Public Library’s Digital Collection, and they both list ‘They’re in the Junk Pile Now,’ ‘My Little

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Submarine,’ ‘If the Girlies Could Be Soldiers,’ and ‘Bowling’ as additional songs from the production. None of these, however, appears in the July 12, 1915 program. Other songs from the program include ‘My Zebra Lady Fair’ and ‘I Can’t Do Without Girls.’

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1916**

A program dated July 3, 1916 indicates that Bernard Granville and Ina Claire paired up again in the tenth production of the Follies to sing Jerome Kern’s ‘Have a Heart.’ But it was one of Granville’s solo features with the women of the chorus that garnered the attention of the critics. Granville’s rendition of ‘Good-Bye, Dear Old Bachelor Days’ was reviewed positively in both *Variety* and *The New York Times*.

*Variety’s* review provides a brief synopsis of the performance:

> During what looks to be the song hit of the show, ‘Good-Bye, Dear Old Bachelor Days,’ sung by Mr. Granville, a library set was used, also in semi-darkness, and as the song proceeded, the lyric telling the bachelor was to be married on the morrow, furniture and pastels were stripped off, the hanging being taken up above, leaving the decorations of “paintings” and so on in a pure white relief. Girls’ head appeared through these in very nicely simulate pastels or paintings…

Granville also performed Jerome Kern’s ‘My Lady of the Nile,’ Louis A. Hirsch’s ‘I Left Her on the Beach at Honolulu, and Irving Berlin’s ‘In Florida Among the Palms.’ The last of these was introduced a short time after the production opened and was listed in the July 3, 1916 program with the caption, “written especially for F. Ziegfeld, Jr.”

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216 *Variety*, June 16, 1916.
Ina Claire received a general compliment from the critic for *Theatre Magazine*, but her songs are not mentioned specifically.\textsuperscript{217} The July 3, 1916 program indicates that in addition to her duet with Granville, Claire performed another song by Jerome Kern entitled ‘When the Lights are Low’ and a tune called ‘Mary Can Do Everything But Sing.’ A program dated a week earlier indicates that Claire was involved in at least one additional musical number when the run began – a duet entitled ‘Ain’t It Funny What a Difference Just a Few Drinks Make?’ – and that she initially sang a tune called ‘I Want That Star’ in place of ‘When the Lights are Low.’

Frances White garnered praised for her performance of “a number of songs with a naïve impudence which,” in the words of the reviewer for *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, “proved delightful.” “Her best number,” wrote the same critic, “was that in which, appearing as Ann Hathaway, she sang of her constancy to William Shakespeare.”\textsuperscript{218} This comment probably refers to ‘I’ve Saved All My Lovin’ for You,’ which appears in the July 3, 1916 program. White is also listed as the featured singer for ‘Somnambulistic Melody’ and ‘I’ve Said Good Bye to Broadway.’

Fanny Brice returned to the Follies for the 1916 production performing musical parodies of ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinski and actress Theda Bara as well as a couple of other specialty songs which were very well-received by the critics. *The New York Times* reported that “certain antics of Fannie Brice, notably her song on Nijinski and an imitation of Theda Bara,” demonstrate “what an artist she is at ‘reeling and writhing and fainting in coils.’” “Her work is scarcely characterized by exquisite refinement,” wrote

\textsuperscript{217} *Theatre Magazine*, July 1916.  
\textsuperscript{218} *New York Dramatic Mirror*, June 17, 1916.
the critic, “but she is uproariously funny.” Variety’s reviewer also applauded Brice’s comic efforts, though he voiced a preference for her specialty numbers: “Miss Brice later walked off with the comedy hit of the show, while singing two songs in ‘one.’ They were ‘The Hat and ‘The Dying Swan’ (the ballet dress)…especially written for Miss Brice by Blanche Merrill.”

Ziegfeld Follies of 1917

The 1917 production of the Follies marked the first appearance of Eddie Cantor in the series. Cantor performed two songs for his specialty, ‘The Modern Maiden’s Prayer’ by James Hanley and Ballard MacDonald and ‘That’s the Kind of a Baby for Me’ by J.C. Egan and Alfred Harriman. Cantor later reported in his first autobiography that the latter song was especially well-received: “I never did less than ten encores.” Indeed, his subsequent recording of both songs indicates – and likely contributed to – their popularity with the public outside the Follies. However, it is difficult to gauge the initial reception of any of the songs from this production; extant reviews are extremely limited in their comments about the music of the 1917 production.

220 Eddie Cantor, David Freedman, and Jane Kesner Ardmore, My Life is in Your Hands & Take My Life: The Autobiographies of Eddie Cantor (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), My Life is in Your Hands, 156.
‘Chu Chin Chow’ is named by the critic for *The New York Dramatic Mirror* as the best number of the production, but the review centers largely on other things.\(^{221}\) *The New York Times* review includes a description of the staging of Victor Herbert’s ‘Can’t You Hear Your Country Calling’ at the end of Act I. Yet the emphasis is on the technical and the visual rather than the musical:

> The entertainment is also well supplied with those mechanical effects that dearly delight the heart of the average audience. Chief of these is a scene that shows a fleet of American warships steaming through the night with guns and signals flashing. The ships sail toward the audience, seemingly increasing in size as they approach. This is a part of a patriotic finale that is more dignified and effective than these usually are – as dignified as they can be with play-actors impersonating Presidents and chorus girl Joans neglecting their ethereal visions for more solid ones in the front row.\(^{222}\)

Fanny Brice’s performance of a song about a woman named Rebecca “who became a successful Oriental dancer because she easily looked the part – being ‘all Egyptian but her nose’” was described as amusing by Burns Mantle in his review for *Green Book Magazine*. But much of his commentary focused on the non-musical comedy of W.C. Fields, Will Rogers, and others as well as the overwhelming visual appeal of the production.\(^{223}\)

Extant programs and sheet music make it possible to reconstruct much of the remaining musical content of the production. A program dated June 25, 1917 lists ‘My Arabian Maid,’ ‘Beautiful Garden of Girls,’ and ‘Hello, Dearie’ filling out Act I, which also included Cantor’s specialty, one of Fanny Brice’s songs, and the patriotic finale of

\(^{221}\) *New York Dramatic Mirror*, June 23, 1917.
\(^{222}\) *New York Times*, June 17, 1917.
Victor Herbert. Act II began with another contribution from Jerome Kern entitled ‘Because You Are Just You.’ It continued with the singing of ‘Jealous Moon’ by Edith Hallor, the performance of ‘Home, Sweet Home’ and ‘Unhappy’ by Bert Williams, and a duet from Fanny Brice and Eddie Cantor entitled ‘Just You and Me.’ The production concluded with the aforementioned ‘Chu Chin Chow,’ sung by Allyn King.

In accordance with the United States’ recent entry into World War I, Ziegfeld added more patriotic fervor to his 1917 production with at least two more war-themed numbers. ‘The Dixie Volunteers,’ written by Edgar Leslie and Harry Ruby, was introduced by Eddie Cantor in the Follies in mid-to-late November.224 ‘I’ll Be Somewhere in France,’ composed by George V. Hobart and Raymond Hubbell, was also interpolated into the production at some point. It was published by T.B. Harms with the standard cover for songs of this production of the Follies, a cover featuring a rendering of Follies dancer Marcelle Earle by the artist Raphael Kirchner.225

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1918**

Following on the heels of the performance of ‘Can’t You Hear Your Country Calling,’ ‘The Dixie Volunteers,’ and ‘I’ll Be Somewhere in France’ in the 1917 production, the 1918 production of the Follies included several war-themed songs and

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224 Cantor’s performance of ‘The Dixie Volunteers’ at the Century Theatre was reviewed in the November 16, 1917 issue of *Variety*. In the November 30, 1917 issue, publisher Waterson, Berlin, and Snyder expressed their gratitude to Ziegfeld for interpolating their hit song into his popular production.

scenes. The most applauded of these was Irving Berlin’s ‘I’ll Pin My Medal on the Girl I Left Behind.’ According to one critic, “Frank Carter put the number over the footlights with vigor.” Variety simply named it the best song of the production. The song was immediately followed by two more war-themed songs called ‘We’re Busy Building Boats,’ and ‘Aviator’s Parade.’ Together with a Yankee Doodle Dance by Marilyn Miller and a banner parade of Allied colors, they constituted the finale of Act I. The other war-themed song of the production appeared in the middle of Act II; Allyn King sang a tune entitled ‘Since the Men Have Gone to War.’

Other songs from the 1918 production incorporated much lighter themes. In her performance of ‘Mine Was a Marriage of Convenience,’ Marilyn Miller impersonated Billie Burke, actress and wife of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. who had recently been seen in a play called ‘A Marriage of Convenience.’ The pun was obvious, and according to one reviewer, overdone. “The fact that Miss Burke played in ‘A Marriage of Convenience’ seems to have had an undue influence in the Follies,” wrote the critic. “There are two dances modeled on that not overly successful little play at the Henry Miller Theatre.” The second number to which the critic refers was probably ‘In Old Versailles,’ performed by Allyn King and Frank Carter and praised by a different reviewer as the best song of the production. As another reviewer indicated, “Miss King and Frank Carter…appeared

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226 Unidentified clipping (MCNY).
227 Variety, June 21, 1918.
228 Unidentified clipping (MCNY).
in a costume number, ‘In Old Versailles,’ both being in the dainty period of ‘A Marriage of Convenience.’ Miss King appearing as Miss Billie Burke and Mr. Carter as Henry Miller, followed a group of pretty girls described as ‘Burkes.’”

Bee Palmer, best known historically for her role in popularizing the shimmy, performed a song called ‘I Want to Learn to Jazz Dance.’ The critic for *Variety* suggested that it was “about the only good number of the regular score, other than ‘The Garden of Your Dreams.’” ‘The Garden of Your Dreams,’ performed by Lillian Lorraine and Frank Carter, also received a compliment as “the most colorful and the daintiest number of the evening.” ‘Starlight,’ ‘A Miniature’ – also known as ‘When I’m Looking at You,’ and ‘A Dream’ were other musical numbers applauded for their “strikingly beautiful” settings.

Lillian Lorraine had at least two other musical features despite the lukewarm reviews she had received for her singing since her Follies debut a decade earlier. She sang Irving Berlin’s ‘The Blue Devils,’ which, according to *Variety*, had no meaning. She also sang a song called ‘Any Old Time at All,’ in which she had “the assistance of a quartette made up of Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, Harry Kelly and W.C. Fields.” *Variety* suggested that Lorraine “did better vocally” now that the Follies were being
staged in an indoor theatre rather than a rooftop theatre. However, she still received such comments as “the only thing [Joseph Urban] did not succeed in doing was to paint a singing voice for Lillian Lorraine.”

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1919**

The *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919* has been hailed as the best production of the entire series, a designation based on several factors including musical content and performance. For example, dancer Doris Eaton Travis has written of “the great cast and memorable music,” including what she called the “never-to-be-forgotten” ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody.’ The Irving Berlin ballad was one of several songs introduced by John Steel, perhaps the most vocally-acclaimed performer to grace the Follies’ stage. The review in *Variety* provides an example of the adulation he received for his singing:

> Mr. Steele won with his voice. The house pricked up its ears at the first sound of it, then they looked Steele over for stage presence, etc. But he kept on singing, and [with] the final time for Mr. Steele to appear to sing, the audience would not permit him to commence before giving him an applause reception. It was quite a demonstration. Wherever Ziegfeld dug Steele up he picked a find vocally. Steele’s voice is a light baritone of super quality.

Steel, along with Delyle Alda, also sang what was seemingly the best production number of the 1919 production, a song called ‘Tulip Time’ by regular Follies contributors Dave Stamper and Gene Buck. Though eventually surpassed in popularity by ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody,’ ‘Tulip Time’ garnered positive reviews for the singing talents of Steel

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234 *Variety*, June 20, 1919.
and Alda and for its picturesque setting. The review in *The New York Times* was typical: “Delyle Alda and John Steel have real voices and use them with a touch of genuine artistry. ‘Tulip Time,’ with its Urban setting of a Dutch garden, dykes and windmills, was a poetic delight.”235 Buck and Stamper also provided ‘Shimmee Town,’ a song based on the recent popularization of the shimmy dance. Performed by Johnny Dooley, the number was described in *Variety* as one that “brought plenty of noise.”

Irving Berlin contributed more than ‘A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody.’ He wrote two songs for a scene about Prohibition – ‘You Cannot Make Your Shimmy Shake on Tea’ performed by Bert Williams and ‘A Syncopated Cocktail’ sung by Marilyn Miller. He composed ‘I’m the Guy Who Guards the Harem,’ sung by Johnny Dooley in a Harem scene that also included Hazel Washburn’s performance of ‘Harem Life.’ Both songs were well-received by the critics, the former being characterized in *Variety* as “much the best of the show’s comic numbers.” Two of Berlin’s earlier compositions were also interpolated into the production. Eddie Cantor interpolated his ‘You’d Be Surprised’ into his specialty; Van and Schenck sang ‘Mandy,’ a minstrel-inspired number originally performed in his army production called *Yip! Yip! Yaphank!*

Johnny Dooley had another feature in Stamper and Buck’s ‘Shimmee Town,’ a song based on the recent popularization of the shimmy dance. Other published songs from the production include Harry Tierney’s ‘My Baby’s Arms,’ Albert von Tilzer’s ‘Sweet Kisses,’ and another Prohibition-inspired tune by Harry Akst called ‘You Don’t Need the Wine to Have a Wonderful Time.’

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235 *New York Times*, June 17, 1919.
Some critics felt that the songs of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1920* were not quite as good as those of the previous production even though a fair number of them emanated from the same composers and were performed by the same singers. For example, *The New York Times* reported that John Steel, “whose voice was one of the hits of last year’s show, again won the vocal honors, even though he did not sing so well as a year ago.”

The critic for *Variety* blamed his material: “Mr. Steel did not loom up as he did last summer in the ‘Follies,’ vocally, for he did not have the songs of a year ago, or anything approaching them.”

Ironically, much of Steel’s material came from the same composers as had that from the 1919 production. In a scene called ‘A Room at Mount Vernon,’ he appeared as George Washington and sang a song written by Dave Stamper and Gene Buck entitled ‘Sunshine and Shadows.’ He also performed two more songs by Irving Berlin – another musical homage to feminine beauty entitled ‘Girls of My Dreams’ and another duet with Delyle Alda called ‘Tell Me, Little Gypsy.’ Moreover, his fourth number, ‘The Love Boat,’ was written by no less a composer than Victor Herbert with lyrics by Gene Buck.

Van and Schenck returned for another year in the Follies. “Appearing in various disguises,” wrote the reviewer for *The New York Times*, they “offered the harmony which has brought them fame.” The duo sang ‘Chinese Firecrackers’ by Irving Berlin, ‘Where Do Mosquitoes Go?’ by Harry Tierney and Joe McCarthy and presumably ‘All She’d Say Was Umm Hum’ and ‘My Home Town is a One-Horse Town’ for their specialty feature.

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at the beginning of Act II.\textsuperscript{238} Apparently their specialty numbers were better received than were their Act I numbers; according to \textit{Variety}, “it was not until [their specialty] that Van and Schenck received a reception…, when they scored heavily.”

As stated in \textit{The New York Times}, Fanny Brice “offered variants of her vampire and ballet numbers, as well as a ‘Floradora’ number, and figured amusingly in a reminiscent automobile skit headed by W.C. Fields.” The vampire number to which the writer refers was ‘I’m a Vamp From East Broadway,’ written by Harry Ruby, Bert Kalmar, and Irving Berlin. \textit{Variety} reported that near the end of the song “Miss Brice held an imaginary conversation with one of her East Side victims, over whom she gloated as he detailed the ruin her vamping had brought to him. At the finish, the singer said, for her exit, ‘You look terrible, thank God.’” \textit{Variety} also described her performance of ‘I Was a Floradora Baby,’ a parody number by Ballard MacDonald and Harry Carroll about the overwhelming fame achieved by six chorus girls in a turn of the century production entitled \textit{Floradora}. In the words of \textit{Variety}’s critic, Brice proclaimed “she was the only one of the original six who had married for love and was still in the chorus, but had a sextet at home, that is, ‘there were five there, but on was to come yet.’” The ballet number in which Brice appeared was not a solo song feature, but a skit entitled ‘The Dancing School’ in which she nevertheless undoubtedly borrowed material from her earlier performances of songs such as ‘Nijinski’ and ‘Becky Is Back in the Ballet.’

\textsuperscript{238} The latter songs were published as having been performed by Van and Schenck in the \textit{Ziegfeld Follies of 1920}. 

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Bernard Granville sang three numbers – Buck and Stamper’s ‘Any Place Would Be Wonderful With You’ and Berlin’s ‘Bells’ and ‘The Syncopated Vamp.’ Mary Eaton performed Victor Herbert’s ‘When the Right One Comes Along.’ Other songs listed in the program of July 19, 1920 include ‘They’re So Hard to Keep When They’re Beautiful’ written by Joe McCarthy and Harry Tierney and performed by Carl Randall and Irving Berlin’s ‘The Leg of Nations,’ also rendered by Randall.

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1921**

Fanny Brice was very well-received in the 1921 production of the Follies. *Variety* reviewer wrote the following words about her performance:

> Miss Brice easily qualified as principal comic, despite the distinguished competition…She appeared no less than a dozen times, and her repertoire ran through typical Brice songs, Barrymore burlesque, hoakum prizefighting with Ray Dooley, housewife-character, serious song-drama, satire and ludicrous Dainty Marie stuff…It is by far the most conspicuous work this veteran funner has every offered.\(^{239}\)

The critic for *The New York Times* had similar things to say, but focused more on what *Variety* referred to as her “serious song-drama.”\(^{240}\) This production of the Follies included Brice’s first performance of Maurice Yvain’s ‘My Man,’ a song which would continue to be identified with her throughout her career and which *The Times* critic proclaimed as “the best song of the evening.”

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\(^{239}\) *Variety*, June 24, 1921.

\(^{240}\) *New York Times*, June 22, 1921.
Surprisingly, a program dated July 18, 1921 does not list ‘My Man’ among the songs to be performed by Fanny Brice. It names ‘Second Hand Rose,’ a song by James Hanley and Grant Clarke which also came to be strongly identified with Brice, Blanche Merrill’s ‘Scotch Lassie,’ and another James Hanley tune called ‘Allay Up.’ The Merrill song turns up in at least one review; a critic for Theatre Magazine wrote, “Fanny Brice was amusing as a Scotch lassie with a Jewish accent and also in a burlesque Apache dance.”

‘Sally Come Back to Our Alley,’ written by Dave Stamper and Gene Buck, was addressed to former Follies star Marilyn Miller, who was at the time performing the title role in a production designed specifically for her by Ziegfeld entitled Sally. The critic for Theatre Magazine found the song nauseating: “When Joe Schenck began warbling in falsetto, ‘Sally, Come Back to Our Alley,’ I thought it time to reach for my hat.” Variety’s reviewer, however, cited a “Sally” number performed by Mary Milburn as “the best song in the show.” It seems that the writer for Variety was in fact referring to a song called ‘Raggedy Rag.’ A program dated July 18, 1921 indicates that both songs were performed in the same scene, a scene seemingly based on Marilyn Miller’s production of Sally.

In addition to his solo feature in ‘Sally Come Back to the Alley,’ Joe Schenck paired with his singing partner Gus Van for ‘Our Home Town’ by Harry Carroll and Ballard MacDonald, ‘Strut Miss Lizzie’ by Creamer and Layton, and at least two

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241 Theatre Magazine, September 1921.
additional songs for a specialty feature in Act II. Their specialty likely included ‘Wang Wang Blues’ and ‘I Hold Her Hand and She Holds Mine,’ both of which were published as having been performed by the duo in the 1921 production of the Follies.

John Clarke was presumably an intended replacement for John Steel, but did not receive the positive reviews of his fellow tenor. He was the soloist for Victor Herbert’s ‘Princess of my Dreams’ and Rudolf Friml’s ‘Bring Back My Blushing Rose,’ neither of which showed his vocal capabilities in the opinion of the critic for *The New York Times*. *Variety*’s reviewer, however, was less willing to blame the material: “Clarke can scarcely replace John Steel. Steel is not essential to Ziegfeld, but some one who can fill his gap is.”

Raymond Hitchcock sang a song entitled ‘Plymouth Rock’ by Dave Stamper and Channing Pollock. The critic for *Variety* described it as “a very bright lyric (also prohibition) which held that it was too bad the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock – the rock should have landed on the Pilgrims.” Other songs listed in the program include Rudolf Friml’s ‘Every Time I Hear a Band Play’ and a song called ‘Some Day the Sun Will Shine’ based on a melody borrowed from Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony.

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1922**

The 1922 production marked the debut of Ed Gallagher and Al Shean in the Follies, performing their song ‘Mister Gallagher and Mister Shean.’ According to the critic for *Variety*, “it wasn’t the riot in the $4 house that vaudeville acclaims it
continuously,” but “the couple got it over to several encores.” The production also marked the introduction of Gilda Grey and her version of the shimmy dance to Follies audiences. In a song called ‘It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway’ by Louis A. Hirsch, Dave Stamper, and Gene Buck, Grey sang about the increasing number of appearances of black cultural expressions in Broadway theatres, the shimmy being a prominent example. Although Variety’s critic seemed lukewarm to Grey himself, he nevertheless reported that Grey received “plenty of applause, so much the other people in the house had to quiet it down.”

Much of the music in the production was used for three ballets. Michael Fokine contributed the choreography for numbers called ‘Frolicking Gods,’ performed to the music of Tchaikovsky, and ‘Farljandio,’ danced to music by Victor Herbert. Ned Wayburn also contributed a ballet number called ‘Lace-Land,’ performed to music by Victor Herbert. Other songs listed in a 1922 program include ‘South Sea Moon,’ ‘My Rambler Rose,’ ‘Bring on the Girls,’ ‘Songs I Can’t Forget,’ ‘Sunny South, and ‘Come Along.’ The New York Times reported that ‘South Sea Moon’ was “apparently the song hit of the proceedings.” But a reporter for Life Magazine suggested that “with musical numbers entitled, ‘Throw Me A Kiss,’ ‘South Sea Moon,’ ‘Bring on the Girls,’ and ‘Hello, Hello, Hello!’ you realize that, after all, there is nothing like canoeing for a summer evening.”

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242 Variety, June 9, 1922.
**Ziegfeld Follies of 1923**

*Variety* characterized the music of the 1923 production as “null and void” with the exception of a song called ‘Lady Fair’ which was seemingly not written expressly for the production. He nevertheless suggested that Paul Whiteman, who led his orchestra in the production, would “undoubtedly plug ‘Shake Your Feet’ into a consistent dance melody.” The critic was seemingly accurate in his assessment about Whiteman; ‘Shake Your Feet’ appears on a list of published songs from the production on the cover of Victor Herbert’s ‘I’d Love to Waltz through Life With You,’ a list which also includes ‘Lady of the Lantern,’ ‘Swanee River Blues,’ and ‘That Old Fashioned Garden of Mine.’ Eddie Cantor’s ‘Oh Gee! Oh Gosh! Oh Golly! I’m in Love’ was also published as having been performed in the production. Like many of his earlier Follies hits, the song caricatured women. In the words of critic Burns Mantle, “Eddie Cantor sings his wiggly wimmen songs, demanding of his charmers that they be ‘wild, weak, warm, and willing.’”

Of all these songs, a program dated November 19, 1923 lists only ‘Lady Fair,’ ‘Shake Your Feet,’ and ‘Swanee River Blues.’ Other songs listed include ‘Glorifying the Girls’ by Dave Stamper and Gene Buck, ‘Little Old New York’ from Victor Herbert and Gene Buck, ‘Take Those Lips Away’ by Joe McCarthy and Harry Tierney, ‘Maid of Gold’ by Rudolf Friml and Gene Buck, and ‘I’m Bugs Over You’ from Dave Stamper and Gene Buck. Such discrepancies suggest an even greater degree of musical transience than was typical for the Follies.

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245 Burns Mantle, “The New ‘Follies’ is a Smart Show” *New York News*, undated clipping (NYPL, Baral Papers Box 13, Folder 18).
Ziegfeld Follies of 1924

The 1924 production fared a little better than the previous production in the critical response to its songs, though the reviews were still not glowing. The biggest musical success of the 1924 production was a medley of tunes by Victor Herbert, who had recently passed away. *Variety* reported that the medley was “finely carried out.” This critic also provided an overview of each individual number within the medley:

Fisher sang ‘A Gypsy Love Song.’ Miss Pennington was cute with ‘I Can’t Do That Sum,’ with a wall of ponies [dancers] behind her. ‘Absinthe Frappe’ had the show girls for illustration. Miss Segal sang ‘Kiss Me Again’ and Gloria Dawn gave ‘Toyland.’ There followed the ‘march of the toys,’ which took in all the Tillers, which entranced down an incline.”

Critics for *The New York Times* and *Life Magazine* also noted the Herbert medley in their reviews. *The Times* critic suggested that there were “a few inspired moments in the course of a scene devoted to a reprise of Victor Herbert’s tunes.” The writer for *Life*, however, characterized such a return to old music with a little sarcasm: “There is also an effective rearrangement of old-time Victor Herbert numbers which sends the blood coursing through long-unused channels of the hearts of those who were at the height of their callow romantic movement when ‘Absinthe Frappe’ and ‘I Can’t Do That Sum’ were new...Ah, me! Those days! Those girls!”

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246 *Variety*, July 2, 1924. This description matches that found in a program dating from June 30, 1924.
Several other numbers received positive comments in *Variety*. The critic suggested that Edna Leedom “got something” with her rendition of ‘The Great Wide Open Spaces’ by Dave Stamper and Gene Buck and that Lupino Lane “made the first score with acrobatic and comic dancing antics” in his performance of a song by Joe McCarthy and Harry Tierney called ‘All Pepped Up.’ He called ‘The Beauty Contest,’ “written partly by Victor Herbert and completed by McCarthy and Tierney,” “the best scenic flash up to that point” and characterized Buck and Stamper’s ‘Lonely Little Melody’ as “a pretty number, though not exceptional.” The critic suggested that ‘Lonely Little Melody’ was in demand among “mechanical music people,” indicating that it was “the best melody in the show.”

Additional song listed in the program during the week of June 30, 1924 include ‘Adoring You’ by McCarthy and Tierney, ‘Biminy’ by Buck and Stamper, ‘Monmarte’ by Gene Buck and Raymond Hubbell, and ‘You’re My Happy Ending’ by Gene Buck and James Hanley. Of these, the first two are also known to have been published as songs from the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1924*.

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1925**

The 1925 production garnered largely positive reviews for its songs. However, like Robert C. Benchley of *Life Magazine* in 1924, some reviewers were critical of Ziegfeld for trying to recapture the success of earlier songs by utilizing the same themes and ideas in the new ones. Louis Bromfield, writing for *The Bookman*, recognized “a great many old sets and trappings, not to mention old ideas decorated afresh – such
originalities as a song called ‘I’d Like to be a Gardener in a Garden of Girls’ with a
general parade of the Glorified American Girls, clad in feathers and tinsel, who stood
appropriately on rocks and steps until the whole stage resembled the aviary of the Bronx
Zoo.”  

Variety’s reviewer was kinder in his review of the number: “The finale is new, though, as with the rest of the show, the same setting is used.”  

The critic for The New York Times was the least bothered by the recycled nature of the number, characterizing it as “especially colorful” with “another new melody for the smooth-toned Irving Fisher.”

Variety’s reviewer described ‘Eddie, Be Good’ as “one of the new songs,” but it too was inspired by earlier productions of the Follies, specifically the performances of Eddie Cantor. Variety nevertheless characterized the Buck and Stamper song as “the best directed of the new ones.” The Times critic also singled it out as “a particularly catchy song…sung by Ethel Shutta and a chorus made up to suggest the hero of the tune, Eddie Cantor.”

The Times reported that Irving Fisher “was effective in ‘Titina,’ another new song, with Leo Daniderff fitting Gene Buck’s words.” Variety called ‘Toddle Along’ “one of the catchiest numbers in the show.” Other songs mentioned in a July 20, 1925 program include ‘Home Again,’ ‘Syncopating Baby,’ ‘In the Shade of the Alamo,’ and ‘The Waltz of Love.’

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250 Variety, July 15, 1925.
Ziegfeld Follies of 1927

The 1927 production of the Follies was the only one of the series to feature the music of a single composer – Irving Berlin. The New Yorker described the music of the production as “reminiscent of everything haunting in the last ten years (‘Blue Skies’ being prominent) and retains the best features of each.”²⁵² Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times reported that the “best-liked numbers” were seemingly ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ and ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You.’ “They represent [Berlin] in the sentimental and wistful style of his best compositions,” wrote Atkinson.²⁵³ The same two numbers were singled out by Alison Smith of The New York World who suggested that they would probably be “echoing to the roof gardens of another summer.”²⁵⁴

The response to Berlin was not unanimous, however. Writing for The New York Herald Tribune, Percy Hammond was rather ambivalent about Berlin’s talent. He was nevertheless impressed by those performing his songs in the Follies. He wrote that Ruth Etting performed ‘Shaking the Blues Away’ “expertly.” He also reported that Franklin Baur “warbled Mr. Berlin’s moronic measures as raptly as if they were sky-like benedictions, which perhaps they are.” Most interestingly, he acknowledged the women of the chorus not only for their beauty but for their talents.

Sophisticated dramatic critics have waxed snooty now and then about Mr. Ziegfeld’s glorification of the chorus girl. In the twenty-first amendment of the Follies these skeptics have a chance to see the error of their doubts. No such aggregation of accomplished members of the ensemble has ever been brought together under one tent. They look well, they dance well, they wear the gorgeous livery of the Ziegfeld revues well, and they sing Mr. Berlin’s ballad melodies

²⁵² The New Yorker, August 27, 1927.
²⁵⁴ New York World, undated clipping (MCNY).
pretty well. Moreover, there is a scene in which these cultured demozelles perform upon all the instruments known to orchestration, including the flute, the xylophone, the hautboy and the piccolo. As the curtain went down last night on the first act twenty of them were performing upon pianos and many more than that were twanging banjos, tooting trombones and b-flat cornets and tickling snare-drums.

Other songs from the production appear in extant programs and as published sheet music. They include ‘Ribbons and Bows,’ ‘Rainbow of Girls,’ ‘It All Belongs to Me,’ ‘It’s Up to the Band,’ ‘Jimmy,’ ‘Learn to Sing a Love Song,’ ‘Tickling the Ivories,’ and ‘The Jungle-Jingle.’ Eddie Cantor, the featured comic star of the 1927 production, only sang one of these, namely ‘It All Belongs to Me.’ ‘Ribbons and Bows’ was performed by Irene Delroy. ‘Rainbow of Girls’ was a feature for Franklin Baur, as was ‘Learn to Sing a Love Song.’ Delroy and Baur formed a duet for ‘Ooh, Maybe It’s You.’ Ruth Etting, who performed ‘Shaking the Blues Away,’ also rendered ‘Jimmy’ and ‘Tickling the Ivories.’ ‘It’s Up to the Band’ and ‘Jungle-Jingle’ were sung by the Brox Sisters.

**Ziegfeld Follies of 1931**

The 1931 production of the Follies was the last to be produced under the direction Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.; he died shortly thereafter in 1932. The production was a combination of old and new, especially with respect to songs. One scene, introduced by a newly composed song by Dave Stamper and Gene Buck entitled ‘Broadway Reverie,’ included a number of previous hits. Ruth Etting sang ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ as Nora Bayes, Harry Richman appeared as Al Jolson singing ‘You Made Me Love You,’ and Jack Pearl rendered ‘Rip Van Winkle’ as Sam Bernard. Reviews of the numbers were mixed. *Variety* suggested that the performers made “little attempt…to resemble the
originals” and were “therefore not so hot.” Ruth Etting’s impersonation of Nora Bayes, however, received compliments from other critics. Robert Garland called Etting’s rendition of ‘Shine On, Harvest Moon’ “the song hit of the evening.”²⁵⁵ May Christie of The New York Evening Journal reported that Etting “imitated the late beloved blues-singer splendidly…even to the e-nor-mous ostrich feather fan which Nora always used to wave as she warbled her philosophical little ditties.”²⁵⁶

Etting’s performance of new material also received mixed reviews. Variety’s critic liked her rendition of a song by Mack Gordon, Harry Revel, and Walter Donaldson entitled ‘Cigars, Cigarettes,’ but described her performance of ‘The Picture Bride’ negatively. Walter Winchell, writing for The New York Daily Mirror, agreed. “Miss Etting again scored powerfully in this playlet with ‘Cigarettes! Cigars!’ he wrote. However, “the ‘Legend of the Islands,’ Tom Tom Dance, and ‘Mailu’ offerings handicapped a slow song story by Miss Etting called ‘Picture Bride.’”²⁵⁷

Helen Morgan, who had made a name for herself as Julie in Ziegfeld’s production of Showboat in 1927, appeared in her first and only Follies. As was true for Bert Williams in many of his Follies appearances, critics found Morgan’s material to be unworthy of her abilities. For example, The New York Sun suggested that her songs “did not seem to suit her personality as well as usual, even if Noel Coward did write one of

²⁵⁷ New York Daily Mirror, July 2, 1931.
them.” The Noel Coward number, entitled ‘Half-Caste Woman,’ garnered a similarly negative reaction from both Robert Garland and the reviewer for Variety. A duet she sang with Harry Richman called ‘I’m With You’ was the most favorably received of her songs.

‘Sunny Southern Smile’ and ‘Help Yourself to Happiness’ were characterized as representative of the score in general by Walter Winchell; they were tuneful, but not great songs. Other listings in the July 1, 1931 program include an opening number from Dave Stamper and Gene Buck called ‘Bring on the Follies Girls,’ a finale for Act I entitled ‘Doing the New York,’ and a feature for the male ensemble set at Buckingham Palace called ‘Changing of the Guards.’

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I’ll Lend You Everything I’ve Got Except My Wife
Nix on the Glow-Worm Lena
1911 Whippoorwill
Dog Gone That Chilly Man
1917 The Modern Maiden’s Prayer
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Hold Me
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