The Film Musical

definition

- ⬈ What is a film musical?

- ⬈ What is not a film musical?

- ⬈ Is it important?

- ⬈ Why?

Altman: Definition: Semantics

- ↗ Narrative

- ↗ Feature length

- ↗ Romantic couple

- ↗ Rhythmic movement and realism

- ↗ Diegetic music and dialogue

Altman: Definition: Syntax

↗ Dual focus

↗ Parallelism

↗ Music and dance as signifiers of personal and communal joy, romantic triumph

↗ Continuity between realism and rhythm

↗ Classical narrative hierarchy reversed at climatic moments

Wedel: Musikfilm

↗ I understand the term as a narrative genre with a duration of at least one hour, with repeated musical numbers with dietetically bound singing that established a significant relation between filmic narration and musical discourse

My definition

↗ music part of the diegesis or

↗ based upon a piece of music (or both)

Genre or number?

- ↗ The musical number

- ↗ The musical moment

- ↗ The crystal song

Musical number

➚ Production number: diegetic singing and/or dancing

Musical moment

↗ Amy Herzog

↗ „In short, the musical moments, as I deploy the term here, occur when music, typically a popular song, inverts the image sound hierarchy to occupy a dominant position in a filmic work. The movements of the image, and hence the structuring of space and time, are dictated by the song."

Crystal Songs

- ↗ Phil Powrie

- ↗ "a films' essence (...) the disruption in question is that of the performance as narrative *intervention* rather than *interlude*". (102,

- ↗ "... [crystal songs] intervene in the narrative to convey change, and in that conveying they also, figuratively, transport us from the artifice of a film to a utopian space beyond artifice, where what we see is what we hear, and conversely, what we hear is what we see." (223)

Genre or Number?

- Genre theory also helpful to analyse numbers in other films

- Theories about musical moments and crystal songs also helpful to analyse numbers in musicals

Altman: Duality

➚ "Duality as an organizing principle, providing no space for plot, motivation, and chronology, which common sense recognizes as important components of numerous musicals" 58

Altman: dualism

- ↗ Setting
- ↗ Shot selection
- ↗ Music
- ↗ Dance
- ↗ Personal style (Star Image)
- ↗ Style

Style: 1. Audio Dissolve

↗ The audio dissolve superimposes sounds in order to pass from one sound to another (Altman 63)

↗ The movement which we see an screen is now an accompaniment to the music track (69)

↗ The music creates a utopian space (69)

2. Video Dissolve

↗ Any visual device bridging two seperate places, times, or levels of reality (74)

↗ Diegetic space – idealized space

↗ Real – ideal

↗ Time (past, future)

↗ Memory, dreams

↗ Reducing oppositions, dissolving contradictions

3. Personality Dissolve

↗ Each character is double

↗ Internalizing the basic dichotomy

↗ Surface character of each member of the couple corresponds to the repressed personality of the other (81)

Sub-genres

- ➚ Show musical
  - ➚ Backstage musical

- ➚ Fairy-tale musical

- ➚ Folk musical

Jane Feuer: Myths

↗ spontanity

↗ integration

↗ audience

↗ entertainment

Richard Dyer: Utopia

➚ "Entertainment… presents … what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized."

Dyer: Non-representative signs

↗ Intensity

↗ Energy

↗ Abundance

↗ Transparency

↗ Community

↗ Audience connection

Sources, precursors

- ↗ Operetta

- ↗ Broadway

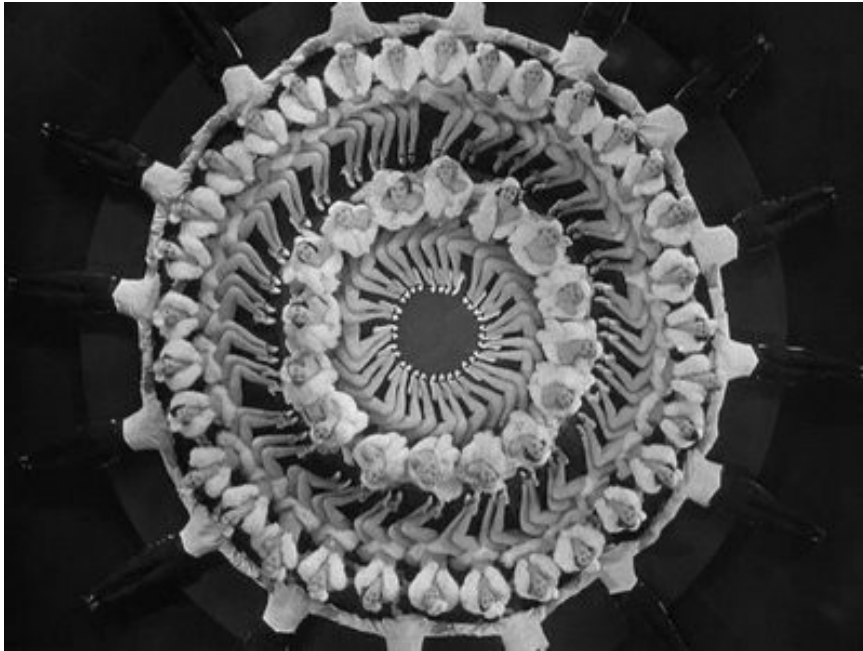- ↗ Silent cinema

Austrian-German Operetta Films

German Musikfilm

Love Me Tonight

Busby Berkeley

Depression

"presenting a world of opulence and excess' alongside narratives dealing with 'struggling chorus girls and Depression hard times"

Rubin (2002, p. 59)

Backstage musical

↗ Theater : film

↗ Stage : backstage

↗ Public : private

Berkeley at WB 1933/34

- ↗ *42nd Street*

- ↗ *Gold Diggers of 1933*

- ↗ *Footlight Parade*

- ↗ *Dames*

Berkeley

- ↗ Camerawork
  - ↗ Tracking shots
  - ↗ Birdseye crane views

  - ↗ The camera dances, not the actors

- ↗ Editing

Gender politics

- identity of camera and spectator

- stock casting of women as visible and men as viewer

- Male artistic direction

- Female bodies

42nd Street

↗ Show=sex

↗ Never danced the lead – never kissed

Backstage structures

↗ Putting on a show

↗ Constituting a romantic couple

↗ "The two separate activities come to be equated, with the long final number celebrating the successful conclusion of show and romance alike" (Altman 227)

Ginger Rogers & Fred Astaire

Freed Unit

↗ Unit system of production

↗ Stars, composers, choreographers, screenwriter

↗ Emphasis on choreography

↗ Long ballet sequences

↗ Camp?

Freed Unit: Films

↗ *Meet Me in St. Louis* 1944

↗ *On the Town* 1949

↗ *Singin' in the Rain* 1952

↗ *The Band Wagon* 1953

Wizard of Oz

Post War Musicals

↗ Extended ballet sequences

↗ Great American Songbook

↗ Musical biographies/biopics

↗ Anti-communism, consumerism, captialism

- ↗ Dramatic instead of comedic

- ↗ Marginalization of African-Americans

- ↗ New gender roles

- ↗ New technology

Extended ballet sequences

- ↗ *An American in Paris* 1951 (18 min)

- ↗ *Singin' in the Rain* 1952 (13 min)

- ↗ *The Band Wagon* 1953

↗ Long player LP 33 1/3rpm

↗ Composers from the 1920s and 30s recorded as the great American songbook

Biopics

↗ *Rhapsody in Blue* 1945

↗ *Night and Day* 1946

↗ *The Great Caruso* 1951

↗ *Glenn Miller Story* 1954

↗ *Benny Goodman Story* 1955

Politics

↗ Anti-Communism: *Silk Stockings* 1957

↗ Consumersim: *Funny Face*

Dramatic

- *West Side Story*

African-Americans

- "end of number, beginning of story"

Gender Roles

Technology

Dinosaurs

↗ *Oklahoma!* (1955)

↗ *Sound of Music*

↗ *Hello Dolly!*

↗ *Paint Your Wagon*

Folk Musical

↗ The sound if nature inspire man to make music 306

↗ The rhythm of life already constitutes a dance 307

↗ Colonization, transforming wilderness into civilization 310

"*A Hard Day's Night* found stylistic inspiration and energy from the French New Wave in its jump cuts and handheld camera: *The Sound of Music* is impeccable in its traditional three-point lightning, carefully balanced framing, and crisp continuity editing." (Griffin, 235)

Bob Fosse

- ↗ Cabaret

- ↗ All that Jazz (1979)

Nostalgia

↗ *That's Entertainment!* (1974)

↗ Beginning of academic research

Post-modern Musicals

↗ *Pennies from Heaven*

↗ *Moulin Rouge*

↗ *La la Land*

Musicals today

- ↗ Fairy Tale: *Enchanted*, *Frozen*

- ↗ Show musical: *Glee*, *High School Musical, Pitch Perfect*

- ↗ Folk musical: *Lagaan*,

French Musicals 1930s

↗ René Clair:

↗ *Sous les toits de Paris* 1931

↗ *Le Million* 1931

↗ *A nous la liberté* 1932

Jacques Demy

↗ *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964)

↗ *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* (1967)

Bollywood

- Musical numbers obligatory

- Dubbed

- 3 hours

- Cinema of interruption

Singers

Asha Bohsle

Lata Mangeshkar

Who is singing?

↗ The character

↗ choir

↗ Change from 1st to third person within a song
  ↗ (f.e. *Mother India*)

Music as commentary

↗ Lyrics in Urdu

↗ Lyrics referencing the epics

Case studies

Kal Hoo Na Hoo

Conclusion

- ↗ Meaning

- ↗ Number/Moment/crystal song

- ↗ Genre – number

- ↗ Diegetic music

- ↗ Overall structure

- ↗ Theories and methods

- ↗ terminology

Finale