Studies of the differences between stage and film musicals are still comparatively rare. Historically, this is understandable: there are important distinctions between stage and film as media, and the businesses that control Broadway and Hollywood are (or were) quite separate. Nevertheless, an investigation of the screen adaptation of a Broadway musical has the potential for revealing not only the exigencies of film treatment, but also aspects of musical drama that apply to either medium. These aspects include the relation of song and dance to plot, the degree to which a musical follows or departs from the conventions of its genre, and even the musical’s relation to the sociopolitical climate in which it was written.

This paper compares the Broadway musical *Cabaret* (Masteroff, Kander, and Ebb, 1966) to the film based on it (directed by Bob Fosse, screenplay by Jay Allen with Hugh Wheeler, 1972). Each version employs both traditional and non-traditional means of “integrating” song and story, but the screen version significantly alters the stage musical’s plot and even the score itself. In doing so, it seizes on certain innovations of the Broadway version and carries them further to present a more unified work. The changes made in the film reflect, perhaps, changes that took place in the political climate over the six years that separate the two *Cabarets*.

The Meaning of “Integration”

A musical is generally considered to be “integrated” if it has a coherent plot and musical numbers whose content relates directly to that plot. One of the clearest definitions of integration can be found in an article by John Mueller that describes six different ways in which a number can be introduced into a show: each successive way is more “integrated” than the one that precedes it. To be considered integrated at all, a number must at least “enrich the plot, but . . . not advance it.” In Mueller’s terms, the most integrated number is one that advances the plot by its content. Most of the numbers in either version of *Cabaret* fall into the former category, as we shall see, but the “enrichment” they provide is unusually subtle and significant.
Format of the Broadway Production

The Broadway version of *Cabaret* is a book musical that departs somewhat from the fully integrated musical structure that was perfected and popularized by Rodgers and Hammerstein. When *Cabaret* premiered in 1966, the integrated form was already being denigrated as a formula by some, and *Cabaret*’s departures were recognized as innovations. *Cabaret* did retain many aspects of the traditional musical, including a main romance between a cabaret singer and a writer, and a secondary romance between their landlady and another lodger. Within this plot and subplot, characters sang about their feelings and situations without regard for whether a song might be warranted or not, within a naturalistic world. This was in keeping with other post-*Oklahoma!* musicals.

On the other hand, the play’s background of Berlin at the outset of the Thirties, and singer Sally Bowles’s connection with a cabaret called the Kit Kat Klub, provided the collaborators with the opportunity to present numbers from the cabaret itself. These might have been introduced via the main plot, in keeping with the tradition of the backstage musical. Instead, they simply appeared at various times throughout the story, jolting the audience by their apparently haphazard placement and their frank decadence. Somewhat less than half of the numbers in *Cabaret* were sung from the stage of the Kit Kat Klub. Yet these numbers were essential to provide the musical with a period atmosphere and social background. They lent the production a style and format that was new to Broadway.

At least two critics recognized *Cabaret*’s unusual structure when it first appeared. Walter Kerr praised it for its departure from the integrated formula, and especially for putting its production numbers (i.e., the songs from the Kit Kat Klub) into the foreground. Martin Gottfried, on the other hand, criticized it for not taking its innovations far enough: “its originality was sacrificed to the needs of traditional plot schemes.”

The Plot of the Broadway Production

In fairness to the collaborators, the plot of *Cabaret* is not completely traditional, especially considering that the tradition in question is the sweetness-and-light world of Rodgers and Hammerstein and their successors. Sally Bowles, who sings in a cabaret and is not above sleeping her way to a better job, falls in love with a writer named Clifford Bradshaw. Their romance begins without much ado, and ends even more abruptly when Sally decides to abort their unborn child. Along the way, Cliff smuggles cash for a friend whom he later learns is a Nazi agent. The subplot is less sleazy, but no less grim. Fraulein Schneider, who lets rooms to Sally and Cliff, finds herself wooed by another lodger, the Jewish grocer Herr Schultz. She accepts his proposal, but in the second act she cancels their engagement because of the political situation.

Serious topics had been treated in earlier musicals, but had never been allowed to interfere with plot resolution. *Cabaret* dispenses with such resolution. Not only do Sally and Cliff part, but essentially they are unchanged. And where an earlier musical might have killed off the character of Herr Schultz, providing a tidy end to his impossible romance, here we know the characters must still face years of apprehension and deprivation, followed by the horror of the camps. The only unifying factor in *Cabaret*’s bleak world is the strained decadence and cynical enthusiasm of the Kit Kat Club with its Emcee.

Adapting the Plot to the Screen

Fosse’s film of *Cabaret* retains the Kit Kat Klub and the Emcee’s presence as
unifying factors. But the story line differs greatly from the stage play. The romance between Sally and her writer (now called Brian Roberts) retains its broad outline and sudden end. Instead of an illegal errand that proves to benefit the Nazis, however, their relationship is disrupted by a long weekend with a charming, diddient baron who seduces them both, then leaves town. For its subplot, the film abandons the stage musical and reverts to John van Druten’s play, I Am A Camera (1952). Fraulein Schneider is now a minor character, as are Sally and Brian’s other flat-mates; Herr Schultz is nonexistent. The subplot instead concerns a young merchant named Fritz Wendel, who is a mutual friend of Sally’s and Brian’s, and the even younger Natalia Landauer, a Jewish heiress. The new subplot strengthens the musical’s thematic concern with personal—and by inference, societal—corruption. In the stage version, this corruption is exemplified by the smuggling episode. But Cliff’s complicity is diminished because he did not realize that his friend Ernst was a Nazi. In the film, Brian’s corruption is not political; it is that he has allowed charm and material comforts to purchase his sexual favors. In this, he is on a par with his lover Sally, to his own surprise. The rather inept golddigging practiced by Sally and Brian is parallel to the film’s subplot, which depicts Fritz as a would-be gigolo who finds his honest love for Natalia to be an unwelcome surprise as Brian finds his homosexual affair.

Unlike the affair between Sally and Brian, and unlike the play’s original subplot, the relationship between Fritz and Natalia is resolved by a marriage, abruptly introduced via a single cut as soon as Fritz admits that he is Jewish. This marriage does not resolve all of the couple’s problems—they are still Jews in Nazi Germany, after all—but it resolves the audience’s expectation in a way the original subplot did not attempt. Given the thematic parallels between plot and subplot, the use of young people in the subplot (rather than the aging grocer and landlady), and the subplot’s resolution by a marriage, it is evident that the plot structure of Fosse’s Cabaret is more traditional than that of the stage version.

Changes to the Score

The film’s use of music, on the other hand, is less traditional than the play’s. The stage version of Cabaret features a number of songs that are sung by characters outside of the Kit Kat Club. As mentioned before, only a couple of these occur in a naturalistic setting; the others are introduced in the style of the integrated musical. It is somewhat surprising to find that the subplot gets a greater share of these latter songs than the main plot does. Sally has only one duet offstage; Cliff shares that duet and has one solo (Sally also has two on stage solos). Fraulein Schneider, on the other hand, has two solo numbers and two duets with her suitor Herr Schultz, who also has a solo turn of his own.

Since the film eliminates the original subplot, the numbers for Schneider and Schultz are naturally gone. The film also eliminates the two numbers for Cliff/Brian. What remains are on stage numbers from the cabaret, and one choral number (“Tomorrow Belongs To Me”) that takes place in a country Gasthaus. Of the principal characters in the film’s two plots, Sally is the only one who sings, and then only on stage. Although the plot structure of the film is more in keeping with traditional musicals, it is not musical! When it does not portray the Kit Kat Klub, the film follows quite naturalistic conventions. In fact, except for two sequences—both outdoors in a park—all of the film’s music is diegetic. The background score for most sequences outside of the cabaret consists of music from natural sources: a song on Sally’s gramophone, an accordion player on the street, a lodger at the piano. 6 This treatment of the score is peculiar for a musical, and it led some of the film’s early reviewers to claim that it is not a musical film, but a “movie with a lot of music in it” (Roger Greenspun?) or a “drama-with-music” (Variety). 8 While these categorizations recognize the film’s unique approach, they overlook the fact that the film employs many formal characteristics of the genre musical.
The function of several individual numbers conforms in certain ways to that of numbers in purely genre (i.e., Hollywood) musicals. Jim Collins has created a paradigm for the function of song and dance within the series of Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers films produced by RKO. Collin's paradigm can be adapted with very little effort to musicals other than the Astaire-Rogers series, and it is easy to show that his three categories apply to many numbers in Cabaret. "Willkommen," for example, is an opening number whose content offers the audience "an alternative to despair," and features discours aimed at both the diegetic audience and the film audience itself; the title song, "Cabaret," is a classic example of the number that glorifies song, dance, show business itself (although in the context of the story, the irony of this glorification is painfully evident); finally, "Mein Lieber Herr" exemplifies song as sexual sublimination. Even without Collins's paradigm we can observe in the Klub sequences the typical accoutrements of the musical number: song and dance, chorus girls in skimpy (though less-than-seductive) costumes, and suggestive humor.

Cabaret also includes a musical fantasy. A sequence with Sally and Brian together in the park (where she is enthusiastic about their marriage plans, while he is distant) leads into a passage in which a rowdy Can-Can at the club is crosscut with flashbacks from Sally's memory, closeups of Sally's face, and an iconic image of a bored, neglected child. This is not quite a dream ballet, but its form and function are not unlike musical fantasy within other films.

Formal aspects of the musical film are also evident in the numbers' presentation. The Kit Kat Klub is set apart from the rest of the diegetic world by its smoky atmosphere and distinctive lighting. The numbers that appear on its stage include inserts of audience reaction, long shots from "within" the audience, wing shots, and so forth. Both musical numbers and nonmusical sequences employ close miking, for the most part, but the volume of the dialogue is low, intimate; the volume of the songs is much greater and more brassy.

Even the chillingly melodic "Tomorrow Belongs To Me," the only number that takes place outside of the Klub, is presented in a stylized fashion with parallels to the Klub numbers. The volume is similarly enhanced, and as the chorus joins the initial soloist, the orchestration grows into non-diegetic proportions. The closeups of the crowd of weekenders recall the audience inserts at the cabaret, as well as the recurrent closeups of the Emcee. As Max's car speeds away from this scene the music continues, and at its end there is an insert of the Emcee himself, smiling and nodding at the film audience.

One task of any musical film is setting up a diegetic world in which the audience can recognize that song and dance are valid modes of expression. Cabaret begins and ends in silence, which is unusual, and to some extent a challenge to audience expectations. The opening song, however, explicitly tells us to "leave your troubles outside." As the Emcee sings this number, the image is crosscut with scenes of Brian arriving in Berlin, and eventually at the door of Fraulein Schneider's flat. Such parallel cutting normally indicates parallel movement in time. However, when Brian arrives at the flat Sally answers the door, and we realize that the song and the arrival by train must have taken place at different times. This sequence indicates, in a fairly subtle fashion, that the musical numbers will be independent of the narrative, yet related to it.

All these formal devices of the musical genre are a signal to the audience that the content of the songs will bear on the story. Because of these devices the connection between number and narrative may even be clearer than it is on the stage. Whether or not that is the case, it is certain that the changes to the cabaret numbers and to the script greatly strengthen that connection.

"Two Ladies" is unchanged from stage to screen, but the changes in the plot lend this song greater significance. In the stage version, it is a generalized example of Berlin's decadence. In the film, it seems directly to refer to the menage a trois that is developing between Sally, Max, and Brian.
"If You Could See Her" contains a one-line change. In both versions, the song reflects the ill-starred romance of the subplot. On stage, after dancing with a gorilla-suited partner, the Emcee tells the audience, "She isn't a meeskite at all!" The word "meeskite" (ugly face) refers to Herr Schultz's song of the previous act, which is a generic plea for tolerance that refers to the Jewish problem only via its melody and use of Yiddish words. In the film the reference to the deleted song is impossible; the Emcee simply says, "She wouldn't look Jewish at all!" This blunter language particularizes the kind of oppression being parodied.

The most sweeping changes to the score concern the heroine, Sally Bowles. In the stage version she has two numbers onstage and one offstage. Since offstage songs (other than "Tomorrow Belongs To Me") have been eliminated from the film, this would leave Sally with only two numbers—not many performances for the star of a musical. Also, on stage Sally leaves her job at the cabaret at the outset of her romance with Cliff, and takes it back only toward the end. Since Sally is the only singer among the characters in the film's narrative, this again would leave her with little singing to do. In the film, Sally retains her job at the cabaret throughout the story.

The title song is the only number of Sally's that the film version retains from the stage play. Three new numbers have been added for her: "Mein Lieber Herr," "Maybe This Time," and "Money, Money." Two of these original numbers are functional equivalents to numbers in the play.

Sally is introduced to the audience on the stage of the Kit Kat Klub. In the stage version, she sings "Don't Tell Mama," a song that emphasizes her illicit lifestyle, but also her vulnerability. On the screen she sings "Mein Lieber Herr," a song that is more directly concerned with sexual liaisons, and that leaves no doubt about Sally's promiscuity. "Don't Tell Mama" preserves the ambiguity about Sally's sexual prowess that is present in the stage version (and incidentally, in I Am a Camera as well). The screenplay of Cabaret presents no such ambiguity, and "Mein Lieber Herr" supports its interpretation of Sally's character as a young woman who is indeed successful at sleeping with men, though not successful at making these affairs pay off.

The next original number, "Money, Money," is essentially a replacement for the Emcee's number "Sitting Pretty," which is called "The Money Song" in the original score. Both songs concern the general shortage of cash in Weimar Germany, but the one in the film ("Money makes the world go 'round") is more explicit about money's power to purchase creature comforts and sexual favors. (It also gives Liza Minnelli, as Sally, a chance to perform with Joel Grey's Emcee.)

The third original song, "Maybe This Time," has no direct counterpart in the stage version. It is directly connected to the story, and clearly refers to Sally's feelings about Brian. Its lyrics, tentative yet hopeful about love, are a counterpoint to the pragmatic lyrics of "Mein Lieber Herr." In fact, the ambiguity present in "Don't Tell Mama"—between liberty and attachment to home—has been broken down into these two songs, which complement each other, and taken together, provide more information about Sally's character and relate more directly to the main plot.

Integration Within the Film

In the traditional, integrated book musical, song is intended to further the story. This presents two problems that apply to both stage and screen treatments. The first problem is how to introduce song into an essentially naturalistic narrative. The second is how to employ song and dance without actually subordinating their function. Musicals that do not approach these problems seriously run the risk of embarrassing the audience (as when a character bursts into song without sufficient motivation) or becoming tedious (as when an actor's voice cannot do justice to a musical number, or a dance routine serves only to slow down the story.)

Preceding sections have discussed how the film version of Cabaret employs many of the plot devices, pertinent lyrics, and cinematic techniques that we have come to
expect from an integrated musical film. The major difference from the standard musical is the separation of narrative and musical number. Separating musical numbers from the principal characters in the plot, with the exception of Sally Bowles, who is a singer, solves the problems mentioned above. Introducing a song presents no problem when the Kit Kat Klub is a diegetic reality. And the musical numbers are foregrounded from the start (via cinematic techniques and their pertinent content), as has been pointed out. This foregrounding of musical numbers inverts their relation to the story, compared to what is usually expected in an integrated musical. The songs do not grow out of the plot so much as they comment on it; still more importantly, they comment on the world in which the plot takes place, and so play a major part in setting up the diegetic realm. Far from being subordinate to the plot, they dominate it and our attention.

Except for the last two numbers in the film, *Cabaret* and the finale (a reprise of “Willkommen”), each number features crosscutting, either between performer and audience, or between the cabaret and events in the outside world. The songs thus function not only as musical numbers but as cinematic montage.11 (Sally’s fantasy sequence mentioned earlier falls into this category.) A member of the audience unfamiliar with musicals might conceivably overlook the connection between lyrics and narrative, but only an audience member completely unfamiliar with cinema could fail to follow the meaning of the inserts in each song sequence. This technique completes the binding of song to story.

**Distancing and Irony**

The songs in both versions of *Cabaret* are as bound to the plot of *Cabaret* as any devotee of the integrated musical might wish. But they function in another direction as well: that of ironic commentary. In the stage version, this irony is less than complete. There is a sincerity of feeling in such songs as “So What?,” “Why Should I Wake Up?” and “Married” that is in contrast to the Emcee’s cynical leer. Once again, the film’s elimination of most offstage numbers contributes to a unity of effect.

The numbers that do appear in the film tend to promote something, for example, sexual entertainment (“Willkommen”), love (“Maybe This Time”), wealth (“Money, Money”), tolerance (“If You Could See Her”), national unity (“Tomorrow Belongs To Me”), and entertainment itself (*Cabaret*). Yet each of their propositions is at odds with diegetic reality. When Sally sings of love in “Maybe This Time,” inserts show her making love to Brian. At the same time, in the cabaret, she is surrounded by empty tables. Only a few shadowy guests linger at the borders of the room. This underscores Sally’s loneliness (explicitly expressed in the lyrics) and foreshadows her breakup with Brian. The Emcee’s plea, “All I ask is a little understanding” during “If You Could See Her” does not alter the fact that his dancing partner looks like a gorilla. The tunefulness and pastoral imagery of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” do not alter the violent brutality of the Nazis, whom we have already seen beating the Kit Kat Klub’s manager. And so forth, throughout the film.

The ironic content of the film’s songs is further emphasized by the almost continual presence of the Emcee, who appears in all of the Klub numbers (he is not seen, but is heard asynchronously, at the beginning of *Cabaret*), and in two inserts, one connected with Brian and Sally’s weekend with Max, the other following “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.” His person is ambiguous, both sexually and politically, and he is the character entrusted with direct address to the film audience, which is one feature of the genre musical film that is otherwise absent from *Cabaret*. Although the Emcee has no part in the plot or subplot, his presence is indispensable, for he serves as a sort of mediator between the audience and the show.

The Emcee is first seen at the outset of the film, standing in front of the irregular mirror that reflects the diegetic audience, and is the last character seen before the film
audience sees the mirror once more, now including uniformed Nazis in the distorted image of the cabaret audience. This mirror is a device borrowed from the stage production (settings were designed by Boris Aronson). On stage, it literally reflected the musical’s audience. In the film, it can only reflect the diegetic audience. That diegetic audience is both distanced from the film and identified with it. The distancing comes from the bizarre appearance of many audience members, whether men or women in drag, or dissipated businessmen who seem to have stepped out of a Georg Grosz painting. On the other hand, the identification is provided by the Emcee. His addresses to the diegetic audience could equally well be applied to the film audience, and via the camera angle, this is exactly what he does at the start of “Willkommen,” in the two inserts, and at the film’s finale. Of the film’s principal characters, the role of the Emcee is the only one played by the actor who created it on Broadway. Joel Grey’s presence can be explained by his considerable talent, but it also, whether intentionally or not, contributes to the blurring of distinctions between the three audiences: Broadway, diegetic, and film.

The irony of the diegetic numbers and the distancing that accompanies them, combined with Cabaret’s historical period and musical style, has inevitably invited comparison with the works of Brecht and Weill. I would like to suggest that the onstage numbers (as well as “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”) which are the only numbers used in the film can also be seen as being in dialectic conflict with the story line. Although the film version of Cabaret does not employ montage in the manner of Eisenstein, many of the numbers in the stage play, and all of the numbers in the film, stand in a relation of conflict to the story events that we see depicted. When we think of Brechtian distancing, we are likely to forget that the audience can become involved with what it sees and hears. The advantage of the dialectic model is that even conflicting images or sounds can be accepted as equally valid. The collision itself is what creates meaning. When Sally sings, “Life is a cabaret, old chum,” we agree with her, but at the same time we realize how ineffective are the pleasures that the cabaret offers.

Further Study: The Two Cabarets and Contemporary Politics

One further topic needs to be raised in connection with the two versions of Cabaret. This is whether the differences between the two musicals, in tone and technique, have to do not only with the exigencies of filmmaking, or with different views of the musical as interpreted by Fosse and his screenwriters, but also with the social climate of 1966, when the first version appeared on Broadway, as compared to 1972, when the film premiered. A full treatment is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will close it by suggesting some directions for inquiry, based on the status of politics in the two musical genres themselves.

Neither the Hollywood nor the Broadway musical is noted for a high political content, although music has formed an important component of a rather distinct tradition of political theater, especially that of Brecht, and Federal Theater Project productions of the Thirties. When more mainstream musicals have introduced themes that might be considered political, they have most often treated oppression of some sort, from the racism depicted in Show Boat (1927) and South Pacific (1949), to the Russian treatment of Jews in Fiddler on the Roof (1964). Inasmuch as Nazism was a racist movement, Cabaret falls into this trend, but the quasi-political musicals that precede it function more as problem plays: they depict a situation. Cabaret too includes such depiction, but the depiction is offered along with devices that implicate the audience in Cabaret’s milieu.

A review of a recent revival of the Broadway version calls Cabaret “the first pointedly self-conscious musical.”13 In Broadway terms, this is basically true. “Self-consciousness,” or better put, reflexivity, was not a common feature of Broadway shows prior to Cabaret. In fact, on Broadway between 1960 and 1966, the backstage
format familiar to filmgoers was virtually unexplored (only Funny Girl really qualifies.) As already mentioned, the reflexivity employed by Cabaret has associations on the stage, with the Verfremdung employed to political purposes by Brecht’s theater. Yet despite this obvious political “clue,” the politics implicit in the story, and despite the reflexive/reflective (if not heavy handed) implications of Aronson’s mirror, none of the New York reviewers in 1966 took the trouble to compare the milieu of the musical with that of contemporary America. One speaks of Cabaret’s “evocation of a dangerous, frivolous and misguided age”; not one of them suggests that the age in which Cabaret premiered on stage might be all of those things as well.

Within the film genre, reflexivity has other implications. In her book-length study of musical films, Jane Feuer has shown not only that reflexivity and self-referentiality have been a staple of this genre, but that musicals have used them largely as a conservative device, preserving the continuity of the musical form (and the entertainers within it) to shape a self-created legend of entertainment. Reflexivity in a film musical is not in itself an innovation, nor does it have the political implications it could have had for a Broadway show in 1966. In the film of Cabaret, the movie musical conventions (enumerated above) have less to do with the politics than do the content of the story and the songs. Nevertheless, when the film premiered, at least two reviewers were quick to mention the parallels between Cabaret’s depiction of Berlin in 1931 and America in 1972.

I do not think it farfetched to suggest that the discrepancy in critical reactions to the political content of the two Cabarets is connected to the changes in political climate that occurred between 1966 and 1972. When the Broadway show appeared, resistance to the Vietnam war was relatively scattered and personal, compared to the massive protests that came later. By 1972, it not only was apparent that Vietnam involved atrocities similar in kind, though not in magnitude, to those of the Nazis, but the Presidency had been implicated in various corruptions that led soon after to Nixon’s near-impeachment. Calling the U.S. government and related institutions “Fascist” had become a catch-phrase. The epithet may have been less than historically accurate, but it was certainly indicative of widespread disgust and disillusionment. In a sense, the parallels between that period of German history and America during Vietnam had been established before the film of Cabaret was even screened. These considerations go beyond questions of film technique. But perhaps the film, by increasing the naturalism of the narrative (relative to the stage version), made such parallels even easier to draw.

To Sum Up

The film version of Cabaret departs from the stage in its plot and even its musical selection, but by seizing what was most original in the technique of the Broadway play, and carrying that technique still further, it preserves much of the original production’s style and effect. In the film, the musical numbers are logical pieces of the diegetic world; they do not induce the kind of discomfort we feel on seeing a prosaic character burst into song. Yet, as in the old-style integrated musical, the relation between song and story is essential. Perhaps even more so in Cabaret, because the numbers do not simply grow out of the narrative, they define and discuss the world in which the narrative takes place. What discomfort the audience may feel arises from the numbers’ irony, the tension between their glamour and their hopelessness, and this effect is entirely appropriate to the film’s content. By presenting the numbers in dialectic conflict, or as ironic counterpoint, to the story line, the film suggests new ways in which song can be used within the musical. By increasing the naturalism of the story, it perhaps makes it easier for an audience to identify with the story and its political implications. Oddly enough, Cabaret arrives at such new effects without
abandoning the vocabulary of the musical film genre, as this paper has tried to show.  

Randy Clark  
University of California at Santa Cruz

Notes

1 I have not attempted to relate either version of the musical to the original stories by Christopher Isherwood. This aspect of Cabaret is discussed by Joe Blades in "The Evolution of Cabaret," Literature Film Quarterly, 1:3 (Summer 1973). Further background is provided by Isherwood himself in the memoir, Christopher and His Kind (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976).


3 In his perceptive review (which also discusses the sexual implications of the story), Stephen Farber (in the New York Times II:1:2 [20 February 1972]) claims that Cabaret "implies a simple causal relationship between decadence and totalitarianism." The musical is susceptible to such a reading, but if I felt that were its intent, I certainly would not enjoy the stage show or the film, and would not be devoting a paper to their construction. I feel, rather, that the decadence Cabaret depicts is a hopeless, hence desperate reaction on the part of the characters to an outside world that they know they cannot control.


6 One curious feature of the adaptation is that most of this background music employs tunes from the stage version that were not otherwise used in the film. This includes the glorious, atmospheric rendition of "Heiraten (Married)" by Greta Keller, a cabaret performer of the film's period. "Married" accompanies several passages when Sally and Brian are together, and in a similarly punning fashion, the tune "Sitting Pretty" accompanies scenes with Max.


10 That is, in the manner of the number popularly known as "Laurie Makes Up Her Mind," created by Agnes de Mille for Oklahoma!

11 Roger Greenspun, The New York Times 22:1 remarks that Cabaret "sometimes looks like an essay in significant crosscutting, or associative montage."

12 Joe Blades in "The Evolution of Cabaret," describes this relationship of numbers to plot as a "strict counterpoint": this is a good term for the numbers' effect, but does not have the political and philosophical connotations of "dialectic"—notations that I believe are entirely appropriate for so politicized a musical.

13 Steven Winn, San Francisco Chronicle, (Datebook, 7 June 1987).

14 The years between 1966 and 1972 finally saw Broadway pay tribute to films (Dames at Sea [1968] and Applause [1970]), and pay reflexive tribute to itself in a half-mocking, half-nostalgic vein (George M! [1968], the revival of No, No Nanette [1972], and Follies [1972]).


18 I cannot close without mentioning Michael J. Fisher, who encouraged me to begin this paper and Vivian Sobchack, who encouraged me to complete it. Their support has been invaluable, and I am grateful to them.