

JERRY HERMAN'S LEADING LADIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Jerry Herman is celebrated for his ability to showcase strong leading female roles in his canon of work that spans some fifty years. In writing such strong female characters, he must produce strong male counterparts to these women who can communicate on their level and not become overpowered by the women's presence.

I was cast in the musical revue, It's Today: An Evening of Jerry Herman, conceived, directed, and choreographed by Earl D. Weaver. My portion of the revue explored Herman's leading male roles of Cornelius from Hello, Dolly!; Mack from Mack and Mabel; Colonel Tadeusz Boleslav Stjerbinsky from The Grand Tour; and Albin from La Cage aux Folles. My analysis of these specific leading male roles uncovers how their relationships with their leading ladies defines their character in each of the musicals for which they were written. It also helped me define multiple characters in the course of a revue with no plot or storyline.

Though all these male characters provided me with challenges, my greatest task was defining Albin in La Cage aux Folles. He provides a unique perspective in that he exemplifies a combination of both male/female characteristics. He is a man who regularly portrays a woman onstage in a drag club as well as assuming a female role in a homosexual relationship. He serves as the "leading lady" for La Cage aux Folles though his character is considered a "leading man" role. He is the consummate representation of all Jerry Herman leading roles, and embodies many of the themes Herman utilizes in all his work.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The American musical has enjoyed several “dynasties” of composer/lyricist teams. These artists are responsible for the growth of their art form and the direction in which it moves after their departure from the spotlight by the legacy they leave. Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II redefined American musical entertainment in the 1920s from the original vaudeville, burlesque, and musical comedy to the first integrated musical, Showboat. Later, the “Golden Age” of the 1940s was defined by the work of composer/lyricist team Richard Rodgers (music) and Oscar Hammerstein II (lyrics). The next age of the show tune during the 1960s did not employ a team. This era was spearheaded by a man from Jersey City.

Jerry Herman is the composer and lyricist of a number of Broadway hits including Hello, Dolly! (1964), Mame (1974), and La Cage aux Folles (1983). Also in Herman’s canon are a number of revues created to showcase his work including Parade (1960), Jerry’s Girls (1985), and Showtune (2003). Herman has been the recipient of three Tony awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009, as well as several nominations over the years.

I was cast in a new revue of Herman’s music entitled It’s Today!: An Evening of Jerry Herman. The show was conceived to celebrate the work of a man who gave the world a number of show tunes synonymous with the Broadway musical. The songs were grouped together by the musical from which they originated and, for the most part, progressed chronologically from Herman’s early to later work.

Herman is known for the leading ladies he writes, which include Dolly Levi in Hello, Dolly!, Mame in Mame, Countess Aurelia in Dear World (1969), Mabel in Mack and Mabel (1974), and Zaza in La Cage aux Folles. While researching the songs I would be performing, I

soon discovered that each of the characters I would be portraying interacted with one of Herman's very strong female counterparts. However, in the case of Zaza from La Cage aux Folles, I was the strong female counterpart, as he is a drag performer.

Recognizing Herman's affinity for strong female characters throughout his oeuvre led to researching his life. Herman felt strong attachments to many significant women, and even utilized his real life experience with influential women in some of the material he wrote. Such a relationship was a lifelong affection for his mother, Ruth, who passed away before Herman enjoyed commercial success. This loss may have been the catalyst for Herman to seek such strong relationships with women throughout his life. Carol Channing, a close friend and the original "Dolly," credits Herman's success to his devotion to his mother: "He wrote for his mother. He has written the most marvelous women's parts for musicals that anyone ever wrote because he wrote it for someone he loved dearly" (Words). Angela Lansbury, another close friend to Herman and the original "Mame," credits Herman's upbringing as a source of inspiration for his optimistic writing: "...he experienced happiness and warmth at home and he used that memory in his lyrics" (Words). Herman confesses he spends every opening night asking himself "where's Ruth," wishing she could share the joy of his successes (Words).

Herman's strong female characters are the heart and soul of each of his shows. These women propel the plot and without them, the shows would not exist. The relationship between the leading female and male characters is equally as important as Herman's influences. Through these relationships, Herman's ladies are able to shine. In this thesis, I explore the relationships between Herman and the women who have impacted his life and examine how these relationships influenced each of Herman's leading ladies. I also explore the relationships these characters have with their male counterparts in the musicals Hello, Dolly!, The Grand Tour,

Mack and Mabel, and La Cage aux Folles, based on the material I performed in It's Today: An Evening of Jerry Herman.

Herman's canon is a direct result of his upbringing and personal life. Reflections of his personal relationships can be seen in his work and being familiar with these relationships allows the performer to create a richer performance. Acknowledging the relationships Herman relies on in his personal life creates a foundation for a performer to understand his work. The influential women in his life impact the characters he writes and ultimately inspired his professional success. Becoming familiar with his creative process through his memoirs and biography enables the performer to draw conclusions from these events and become better acquainted with the composer and his work. Exploring Herman's upbringing and relationship with his mother in addition to other personal and professional relationships paints a picture of a man who relies heavily on women in his day-to-day life. These characteristics then find their way into his work and become inspirational for him as he creates female characters for the Broadway stage.

CHAPTER TWO: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Early Life

Jerry Herman was born in Jersey City, New Jersey on July 10, 1931 to Harry and Ruth Herman. The Hermans had a great admiration for the theater and attended a Broadway show almost every Friday night (Herman 5). When young Jerry was old enough to go with them, he was exposed to a style of entertainment that had a profound effect on his taste as a composer. He recalls seeing the Broadway productions of such classics as Finian's Rainbow (1947), Brigadoon (1947), and Oklahoma! (1943). This family tradition became the beginning of Jerry's musical training (5).

When Herman was 14, his parents took him to see Irving Berlin's Annie Get Your Gun (1946). He sat in the audience in awe of Ethel Merman, he recalls, "that larger-than-life lady who was on stage belting out songs like home runs" (Herman 5). Sitting in the Majestic Theatre, Jerry decided that providing the world with this quintessential Broadway style of music had to become his life's work. He remembers saying to himself, "Okay, kid, this is it. This is the most exciting thing in the whole world. It just doesn't get any better than this" (5). Herman's passion for the musical theatre provided him with a sense of urgency to contribute to the art form. He felt that Berlin had given him a gift through music and he was enamored "of the great joy it must be to be able to give the gift of music to people" (6). From this moment on, young Herman set out to do just that.

The Hermans ran a summer athletics camp in upstate New York called Stissing Lake Camp. From the time Jerry was six through 21 (1937-1952), the camp was the family's home

during the summer season. With an interest in athletics, Harry was hopeful his son would share his affection for sports. It was not to be. Jerry was always drawn to the piano over the athletics field. He felt it more important to hone the skills for which he was naturally gifted, such as playing the piano, than play sports (11). Jerry never took issue with attending the camp. In fact, as an only child, the children at camp became his surrogate siblings (3). He also credits his time at the camp with forcing him “out of [his] shell” and making it possible for him to form life-long friendships as a result (3). He even says the song “The Best of Times Is Now” from La Cage aux Folles finds roots in his summers at camp.

Jerry’s time in high school, between summers at Stissing Lake, was not such a happy time for him. He never felt like he fit in with the other students, and instead of playing sports after school, he would go home and sit at his mother’s piano, his “security blanket” (22). His problem was not solely his inherent shyness. He was also two years younger than the other students in his class as well as extremely small for his age (21). This led to a feeling of insecurity and shyness in young Herman. Since Jerry was somewhat unhappy during high school, one might expect his music to reflect his inner frustration, but this is not the case. His thematic material from this period is surprisingly upbeat. While Jerry might have thought he was quite the loner, he did not spend every afternoon of his adolescence alone at home. Phyllis Newman, who grew up with Jerry and became a life-long friend, found herself singing with him on many occasions after school in Jersey City. He even wrote a small musical part for her in Step Right Up (c. 1947), a musical about a couple of lovers at a carnival (22).

Up to this point in his life, Jerry only had thought of songwriting as a hobby. He enjoyed sitting at the piano for hours but never considered the task of creating show tunes as a viable career option. When Jerry was 17, the Hermans began to discuss which university he would

attend. Since he never considered a career in music to be stable, Jerry opted to explore his other interest and talent, design and architecture. He attended the Parsons School of Design and remained in his parents' house during his freshmen year (17).

During that first year, his mother approached Jerry with a proposition. Ruth said, ““You know, I have a friend in my bridge club who has a friend, and the brother of this friend of my friend knows Frank Loesser....I want you to play your stuff for him”” (17). After a little coaxing and a good dose of motherly guilt, ““Would you please waste a half hour of your life?”” (18), he allowed Ruth to set up the meeting.

When the day of the meeting arrived, 17-year old Jerry, with his suitcase full of songs, went to his meeting with Frank Loesser. Jerry had arranged for Phyllis Newman to attend as well, as he needed someone to perform his material for Loesser. What was scheduled to be a half hour appointment turned into an afternoon Jerry Herman would never forget. After hearing some of his work, Loesser took out a pad and began drawing a train. This analogy of song writing is something Herman remembers very vividly. The locomotive was the first “fascinating idea.” It was followed by a number of other ideas or “boxcars” of varying colors, but they all had to go where the locomotive was going. Finally, the bright red caboose ended the song with a “little surprise” (19). After their afternoon meeting, Loesser questioned Jerry as to his current enrollment in school for design as opposed to music. Loesser said he thought Jerry should try songwriting as he thought Jerry could “make it” and had genuine talent (19).

After returning home, Jerry told his parents about the meeting. His mother was thrilled, but his father was apprehensive about his ability to succeed and provide himself with a steady income. After some convincing, his father agreed to allow him to leave Parsons and seek a school with a vibrant theatre department (21).

During this same period, Herman's father allowed his son to put on a show at Stissing Lake Camp each summer. This was the time when Jerry began to find his true identity and to understand where he fit in the world (12). The show he chose, probably due to his memories of the Broadway production he saw as a child, was Finian's Rainbow. The first production was such a success that the campers wanted to return the next summer and do another show. "By the next season, I had turned my father's successful athletic camp into an even more successful dramatic camp" (12). This increase in confidence as an artist indicates Herman's growth and maturity on which he capitalized with his next endeavor. That summer's show was A Tree Grows In Brooklyn. The star of the Stissing Lake production was Alice Borden, who would later play a major role in Jerry's life. She performed his material during backers' auditions for Hello, Dolly! and Mame (150). In addition to Jerry creating life-long friendships, particularly with women, he also "finally succeeded in making [his] father enormously proud of [him]" (13). Harry Herman's pride would continue through the remainder of his life and culminate for Herman's first New York theatrical project where Harry would raise the necessary funding for the show to be produced.

The process of putting these summer productions together year after year became yet another learning experience for Herman, just as observing Broadway productions had been earlier in life. He credits this and the following summers as the experiences that taught him "how a good show is constructed" (12). This knowledge would stay with Herman through the development of all his later projects where he was required to build a show from only a source text or nothing at all.

After leaving Parsons, Herman decided to attend the University of Miami. Coincidentally, the first show he took part in at U of M was Finian's Rainbow, just as his

inaugural show at Stissing Lake had been a few years earlier. The experience helped him gain a good deal of self-confidence that he had lacked to that point. When looking for schools, he remembers saying, “I need to join a fraternity and do varsity shows. *I need to make friends*” (23). And make friends he did. At this point, Herman made the personal decision not to allow his shyness to prevent him from having meaningful relationships. As a result of his decision, Herman found meaningful, life-long relationships during his time in college. On the first day of classes, he met Carol Isaacson, “and we became best friends for the rest of our lives” (23). Their relationship quickly flourished after he learned she was a singer and she learned he was a songwriter, “and from that moment, we became brother and sister” (24). Their relationship remained strong until Carol’s untimely death several decades later.

Herman did join a fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau, and met Bob Dorian. Bob later married Carol, and the three of them became like a family (24). Beyond personal relationships, a positive aspect of fraternity life was the annual inter-fraternity musical competition. His freshmen year, Jerry wrote his fraternity’s skit and won the competition. The following two years saw two more wins for the group with Jerry at the helm. The competition was finally scrapped, and all the fraternities and sororities sought Jerry to put on a big joint varsity show (24).

This new found popularity taught Herman how to use his talent to “make a place for [himself] in the world” (24). He finally felt like he fit in and people liked him for who he was. In retrospect, his time at Miami was doubly satisfying because the shows he worked on during that period were among the last pieces of his work Ruth would see. She passed away in 1954 when he was 21 and never saw any of his work on Broadway.

After graduating, Jerry produced an Off-Broadway revue of some of the songs he had written in college. *I Feel Wonderful* (1954) was the last piece of his work his mother, Ruth, saw.

This show also was significant for his relationship with his father, because it represented Harry's belief in his son and the career he chose. The senior Herman generated the funding necessary to produce the revue by promoting the idea to businessmen and asking for one hundred dollar bids of support (14). The show ran for two years.

After the show closed, Jerry had to get a steady job to support himself. He only knew how to play the piano, so he took a job at a New York cocktail club called the RSVP. At the time, renowned cabaret artist Mabel Mercer was the headliner, and, yet again, Herman was given an extraordinary life lesson, this time in song interpretation. He cites Mercer as showing him "how important it is to put *exactly* the right word on the right syllable" (27). Herman also credits Mercer for teaching him "the brilliant timing of a line" (27). He employed what he learned from her when writing "Time Heals Everything" for leading lady Bernadette Peters in his production of Mack and Mabel (1974). This brilliant timing is shown in the last line of "Time Heals Everything," "...but, loving you" (Stewart 54). Specifically the word "but" has to be timed exactly right for the moment of pain to land with the audience. The observation of the comma following "but" is the moment at which the singer has the opportunity to convey the hurt and resolution Mabel feels at that moment. Near the end of her career, he was able to see Mercer perform "Time Heals Everything." It was, in his words, "truly magical" (27).

In 1958, revues were the trend. Artists looking to showcase their material would compile an evening of their work and hope producers/directors might take notice of their potential. Not only were revues ideal for showcasing aspiring composer's/performer's work, but they were also economical regarding a necessity for need for sets and costumes. Following I Feel Wonderful, Herman produced Nightcap. He found a club called the Showplace, and after playing a few of his songs for the owner, he was hired (30). Much like his shows at Stissing Lake, Herman was

responsible for all the sets, props, and direction. He also provided material for the sketches and played the piano for the performances. His long-time friend Phyllis Newman provided the choreography for the show. She also set up an audition for a friend of hers, Charles Nelson Reilly, who would become a familiar performer in Herman's early work, as after Nightcap closed, Reilly played Cornelius Hackl in Hello, Dolly! (31). Reviews of Nightcap deemed it "*the* cabaret show to see" (33). The publicity allowed Herman to meet another very influential lady in his life, his first agent, Priscilla Morgan.

Following the success of Nightcap, Herman took on another project called Parade. It was an expanded version of Nightcap with a larger creative team. Since it was a fully realized theatrical piece and not just a cabaret show, it was open to more criticism. Herman recalls how devastated he was when the one negative review (out of six) came out (36). However, the show was not a negative experience for him; he says it brought out the true optimist in him (a character trait with which he is now so closely associated).

Following one performance, Gerard Oestreicher, a producer, informed Herman that he was looking to produce a new musical and in the market for a composer. They made a date for lunch, and at that meeting, Jerry discovered it was to be a Broadway show. Oestreicher then revealed that his musical would be set in Israel and wondered if Herman was capable of writing stylized music. Herman's response, for which he can only thank his always supportive mother, was "You have come to exactly the right person. I grew up in a Jewish home and I had a Jewish mother who taught Hebrew music at the YMHA in Jersey City" (37). He also asserted he grew up with his Jewish heritage all around him (37). His ability to declare his credentials and background so well to a producer shows Herman's personal growth and confidence continuing to flourish, not to mention his gratitude for how his mother raised him. The show he would be

working on was Milk and Honey, which became Herman's first professional experience on Broadway.

Broadway Career

Although Herman has never been formally trained as a musician, his experience creating Milk and Honey (1961) was very positive and afforded him a great deal of new knowledge.

Herman began writing "complicated rhythms and counterpoint and a lot of other technically intricate stuff" (47). He goes on to admit, "I honestly didn't know what I was doing. I was just using my ear and my instinct" (47). This effortlessness continues to this day with Herman's work and is a testament to his genius and awareness of the American musical audience sensibility. His passion for Milk and Honey can be traced back to his Jewish family and upbringing, even directly to his mother, Ruth. Even with her passing, the religious foundation she established in her son empowered him to succeed with his first Broadway endeavor.

Oestreicher arranged for Herman and Don Appell, the book writer, to travel to Israel to do research for the show. They had no solid source material from which to draw a story and were left to develop one from their experiences in the field, literally. Much of their trip was spent experiencing what the Israeli government wanted to show them, but Herman and Appell agreed that they wanted to see the "real" Israel. What they discovered was a people struggling to define themselves. In 1960, the country itself was only 13 years old and not rich in national customs or traditions. This "real" Israel is what Herman and Appell felt should be portrayed in their work.

For his first Broadway experience, it was ideal. The creative process was exciting and collaborative, Herman was able to learn how a team assembled to create a production on such a

scale. "That collaboration, that incredibly tight teamwork, is what the American musical theater is all about" (44). He goes on to say, "That was the kind of collaboration we had on Mame and La Cage aux Folles, which were the two greatest experiences I ever had in the theater. And that's why I adored Milk and Honey, because it was the first show that started me working with a team of collaborators" (44). To this point, Herman had been the heart and soul of every production of which he had been a part. From Stissing Lake Camp to his early Off-Broadway productions, he had done everything from composition and music direction to sets, costumes, and publicity. His experience on Milk and Honey allowed Herman to begin finding his place in the professional realm of Broadway and narrow his focus to the music and lyrics into which he poured so much of himself. This is not to say he had no opinions on other theatrical elements, but he was able to concentrate on his primary contribution to the piece and the show benefitted from this focused effort. These lessons would influence his entire future, as he said, in Mame and La Cage aux Folles. A personal milestone for Jerry also was experiencing the great thrill of hearing his music played by a full Broadway orchestra for the very first time (45).

Milk and Honey received rave reviews: "A HEARTWARMING integrity shines through "Milk and Honey," which arrived last night at the Martin Beck Theatre. An endearing asset in any theatre work, it is remarkable in a musical" (Taubman). However, following the excitement and opening night parties, Herman returned to his apartment alone. He recalls what a wonderful feeling it was to have a hit on Broadway, but remembers the feelings of loneliness that night (55). He was regretful that his mother was unable to share in the joy of his success.

Following the success of Milk and Honey, Herman set out to write an Off-Broadway musical, Madame Aphrodite (1961). He felt he wanted to stretch himself artistically. Herman describes the show as "this dark, almost creepy little parable about an ugly old woman who

makes this bogus beauty cream on her kitchen stove and sells it to her neighbors as revenge for their meanness to her” (60). The show was a resounding failure because it was not something people expected at the time. Broadway was about cheery, upbeat musicals and this was not one. “The music was never recorded, and the whole thing was swept under the rug very quickly” (Herman 59). He wanted to write something darker and more introspective and did; however, it just was not commercially successful. Milk and Honey established an expectation of Herman’s work for audiences and such a direct departure so quickly left audiences confused. One aspect of the show that did not get “swept under the rug” was the fact that the show was named for its leading lady. This trend continues even to Herman’s modern work.

“I have always been drawn to outrageous, larger-than-life female characters” (Herman 60). This statement defines Herman’s most commercially successful show, Hello, Dolly! (1964). The journey of Hello, Dolly! began long before her name would ever be seen in lights at the St. James Theater. The original title, Dolly: A Damned Exasperating Woman, proved to be far more appropriate to Jerry’s personal experience working on the show than he would have liked, or should ever have had to endure (Citron 80).

The show began on the heels of the success of Milk and Honey, and ironically got its start in the same room, producer David Merrick’s office. This visit would prove to be mixed with joy and sorrow. Herman was hired to write the music for Merrick’s production of a musical based on Thornton Wilder’s The Matchmaker, and, while he was writing, had only one voice in mind: Ethel Merman. Jerry confesses, “I even worked several of the numbers so they led up to her ‘money note’” (71). However, after receiving a call from Merrick himself, Merman said she did not want to spend any more of her life in a dressing room. She had enjoyed an illustrious career and wanted to enjoy the comforts of life. The project already was underway, so with or without

Merman, the show had to go on. This prompted a search for a new actress to take on the role of Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi. The creative team finally settled on Carol Channing, who became synonymous with the role.

While Channing brought her signature exuberance to the rehearsal process, everything was not as pleasant for Herman. During the Detroit previews, Merrick was unhappy with some of the notices about Dolly! and called in Bob Merrill, Charles Strouse, and Lee Adams to “fix the score,” which devastated Herman (95). This remains one of the hardest moments in Herman’s professional career.

During their stay in Detroit, the creative team got word of Louis Armstrong’s recording of “Hello, Dolly!” which would ultimately be the catalyst to change the show’s title (102). With audiences so familiar with the song “Hello Dolly!” it seemed only appropriate for the show’s title to reflect its commercial success which drove ticket sales and publicity. With the popularity of Armstrong’s version, the song earned its place in the top ten of the top 100 most successful songs of all time with the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (103).

For Jerry, “the whole [Dolly] experience forced [him] to grow up” (Herman 68). After Merrick’s betrayal, Herman was left to complete the score on his own and won a Tony for his work. With the purgatory that was the creative process of the show behind him, he was able to realize how much he had grown as a person from the experience. He held his own within the ranks of veteran Broadway professionals and really showed the Broadway community what he was capable of.

Herman’s experience with Mame (1966) was an exact inversion of his experience on Hello, Dolly!. He refers to the process as “having a love affair” (129), and “Mame Dennis was

the best character for a Broadway musical who ever came down the pike” (Herman 111).

Herman’s song writing process for Mame was another vast improvement from Hello, Dolly!.

Herman’s song writing technique is not what one might expect from such an accomplished composer. While most composers are musicians who write music, Herman is a theatre man who writes and composes for character. His experience writing songs for Mame began with “It’s Today,” which Herman says, “establishes her as a madcap, fun-loving lady who has her own set of values - from when to throw a party to when to fight prejudice” (112). He then moved on to “Open a New Window,” which established her voice as an optimist. This is not only a characteristic of Mame, but of Herman himself. This is a point where one might see Herman himself becoming part of one of his characters, in addition to the influential ladies in his life. Unlike Dolly!, Herman states, “the rest of the songs just started pouring out of me. I never wrote more quickly, or with more assurance in my life, because I loved what I was writing” (113). Herman’s apparent ease with writing Mame exemplifies his optimism and passion for the project. One might even equate the ease with which he wrote the score (for such an optimistic character) as a result of his own new found optimism following his Hello, Dolly! experience.

While working on Mame, Herman met life-long colleague, Don Pippin, who remains his music director of choice (134). Don’s father came to support his son on opening night, as did Jerry’s. Harry Herman’s acceptance of Jerry’s chosen profession is recalled by Jerry in his memoirs:

“On his way to the orchestra pit, Don noticed his father sitting in the third row. He smiled and gave his father a little nod of recognition. The elder Mr. Pippin was so thrilled that he turned to the gray-haired gentleman sitting next to him, who was an absolute stranger to him, and said ‘that’s my son conducting.’ The stranger smiled back and said. ‘He’s conducting my son’s music’” (135).

By this simple exchange, Harry Herman's pride in his son's accomplishments is evident.

Despite box office success, Mame did not win the Tony for Best Score in 1966, but Herman did win for Best Lyrics. Many fans were upset about this, but Jerry was thrilled to be acknowledged for his work as a lyricist (121). He appreciated the recognition of his work writing both music and lyrics.

With the success of Mame on Broadway and a continued growth in self-confidence, Herman ventured to create a musical unlike his earlier work. Based on The Madwoman of Chaillot, Dear World "is a delicate piece of work about an old woman considered by most people to be mad, but who singlehandedly stops a group of greedy, unscrupulous businessmen from destroying Paris" (170). Not only was the story unlike anything Herman had worked with previously, Herman even vowed to create a score that was a total departure from his previous flashy Broadway sound. Herman had a vision of a "chamber piece for a singing ensemble of not more than a dozen performers" (176).

The 1969 Broadway production of Dear World was anything but the intimate musical Herman envisioned. With Angela Lansbury as the Madwoman, audiences came expecting another Mame and were bitterly disappointed to find a dark chamber musical in its place. With many other problems beyond audience perception, including inconsistent directing styles, and a house far too large to get across the point of the show, Dear World only ran for about six months (183). The situation surrounding Dear World is strikingly similar to Madame Aphrodite. Herman has a great desire to grow and stretch himself creatively. These endeavors were not failures due to a lack of effort or talent; instead, Herman was simply subject to the scrutinies of the public after his successes. Where so many artists are able to experiment in private before a

resounding success and the fame that surrounds it, Herman had success before totally defining himself and, as a result, experimented publicly and was subject to outside opinions and criticism.

Following the failure of Dear World, Herman decided to move forward in his career and look for a new project. That project was Mack and Mabel (1974). The show traces a fantasized version of the relationship between early Hollywood filmmaker Mack Sennett (inventor of the famous Keystone Kops) and his silent film star/lover Mabel Normand. Herman was drawn to the story because of the tension in the relationship; Mack was unable to confess his love and Mabel desperately needed to hear it.

Herman fondly recalls the writing process of the show as one of his favorites. “The sound gave me new direction and put me on fresh musical ground,” referring to “Movies Were Movies” (187). Herman was excited because he was given a specific time period and world in which to write. He wanted to create a sound that echoed the soundtracks of the silent films from Sennett’s era. “Movies Were Movies” provided a platform to integrate a number of stock silent film motifs throughout, such as the descending passages in the brass following “...when you paid a dime to escape,” for example. The descending passage may evoke the image of the villain laughing as he ties the girl to the train tracks before the hero arrives to save her. These moments were not quoted from any specific silent film, but rather ideas of an era that may or may not have actually happened: an homage to an idea.

One of the musical theatre standards that came from Mack and Mabel was Mack’s song to Mabel explaining what to expect in a relationship with him, “I Won’t Send Roses” (see song analysis in Chapter Four). It has been sung by Howard Keel and more recently John Barrowman in cabaret settings. Additionally, it has been featured in a number of Jerry Herman revues.

With such a pleasant creative process, including his work with Producer David Merrick and Director Gower Champion (both from Hello, Dolly!), Herman was shocked when Mack and Mabel failed to pass the six month mark on Broadway, although audience and critical praise accompanied the show during pre-Broadway productions. Herman cites Mack and Mabel as the only show he had “open on Broadway that was *less* polished and *less* perfect than the production that had gone out of town four months earlier” (195). Key problems with the show included a vast age difference between Robert Preston’s Mack and Bernadette Peters’ Mabel. The audiences did not respond well to this girl and grandfather relationship despite their impeccable performances (192). Other problems contributing to the overall failure of the show were Champion’s obsession with the Keystone Kops number. Champion saw this as the “Waiters’ Galop” from Hello, Dolly! and wanted the number to stop the show, just as his jumping waiters had several years before. The number never came together as intended and, as a result, the remainder of the show was somewhat neglected by Champion. Finally, the decision was made for Mabel to die in the end. This really made the end of the show uncomfortable because there was no real resolution of the relationship.

Herman was the only creative team member who was omitted from the Tony Award nominations that year. It still bothers him to this day. Herman felt as though the show was being sold out and passed over for no good reason by the Tony nominating committee (197). After the initial failure of Mack and Mabel, Herman’s self-proclaimed favorite score, he suffered the “heartbreak of [his] career”. Herman loved his work on Mack and Mabel and thought it was his best to date. The absence of professional recognition for such an accomplishment took its toll on Herman’s confidence. Due to his previous Broadway successes and a hobby of redesigning

houses and selling them for a profit, Herman did not have the financial need or desire to write anymore at the time, “so [he] didn’t” (201).

Following the closure of the Broadway production, theatre professionals latched onto the show to “work out the kinks”. It enjoyed a cult following in England (198). The Mack and Mabel mania culminated in a one-night concert performance in 1988 where “the *International Herald-Tribune* called the score ‘one of the richest and most distinctive in the whole postwar history of Broadway’ and identified [Herman] as ‘the greatest working Broadway songwriter in the Irving Berlin tradition of sheer orchestral entertainment’” (199). A 1995 London revival also got rave reviews and enjoyed financial success including a “*London Evening Standard* Award for Best Musical” (200).

After “a professional exile in Hollywood”, where Jerry endured the film version of Mame, starring Lucille Ball (which was a huge failure both critically and financially), he returned to New York to begin work on his next score, The Grand Tour (1979), with longtime friend and collaborator Michael Stewart (216). Given their track record of Hello, Dolly! and Mack and Mabel, Stewart would have been an ideal choice for Herman to collaborate with yet again. Instead, Herman refers to this project as “a dreadful mistake”.

With his previous endeavors, Herman had an affinity for the material: the leading ladies, the compelling stories, etc, but none of these interests were present for The Grand Tour.

“I wrote a show for the wrong reasons. I did not agree to do this show because I loved the material but because I loved the people I would be working with.” (Herman 216)

When trying to avoid joining the creative team, Herman told Michael Stewart:

“I really don’t want to write a musical about some man who is running from the Nazis. I would rather do something with showgirls.” (216)

This admitted lack of passion and care for his work would become evident in the product. Of all his work, Herman acknowledges The Grand Tour as his least favorite. He does not fault the story, but rather credits it as a positive:

“The story, which is about the relationship of this aristocratic Polish colonel and this little Jewish refugee, is actually quite charming. It has humor and a lot of heart” (217).

While Herman found the story charming, it did not peak his interest. Perhaps, it was the absence of a strong central female character in addition to the lack of showgirls. In a field such as his, a lack of passion can really break a project, because the entire process is dependent upon the care and guidance of the creative team. From the beginning, he took issue with the story as being too “static and the scenes too repetitive” (219), which is exactly the problem with the show and why it never enjoyed commercial success. Herman even calls the show a “mistake” (219). This is not to say another composer would not be passionate about such a story, but Jerry Herman was simply not the person for the job. Herman actually liked some of the songs he wrote for the show, including “Marianne”, but he says the show was simply not spectacular enough to be a hit on Broadway (219).

With the third commercial failure of his career behind him, Jerry looked to the future. Despite critical scrutiny regarding his previous work, Herman continued looking for a new project to spark his creativity. That spark came in a movie theatre with lifelong friend and secretary, Sheila Mack. La Cage aux Folles was the spark, and it developed into quite a fire.

Herman recalls the impact the show had on his career:

“*La Cage* saved my sanity and put me back on top. I mean, *really* on top. To write a show that runs for five years on Broadway and becomes an international phenomenon - that’s the top. To win a Tony Award over five of the most talented composer-lyricists in the business - that’s the top. Best of all, this show was an entertainment that also made an important

statement about our lives. That was the crowning glory” (223-4).

After viewing the original French film of the same name, Herman created a musical version of La Cage aux Folles. The team assembled consisted of director Arthur Laurents, who had a more cerebral approach to directing musical theatre; book writer, Harvey Fierstein, who brought the more liberal, shock-value perspective to the piece; and Jerry as the moderate member of the team with all the flashy Broadway numbers to his credit (226). The dynamic of the group was very collaborative and open. They were all working toward the same goal and recognized each other’s contributions as valuable. In Herman’s words, “Our collaboration worked because we all respected each other, learned from each other, and shared our ideas with each other” (227). They were united by their passion. Ultimately, Herman says La Cage aux Folles was such a resounding success “because it *doesn’t* preach...it shows people that someone’s sexuality doesn’t determine what makes them a good or a bad person” (228).

This message in the show has never been a secret. In Jerry’s words, “it’s about standing up for yourself and fighting bigotry” (226). During its tenure on Broadway, it was indeed criticized, but more often for not going far enough to make a political statement rather than portraying a love story between two men onstage (228). This reaction might have been expected by radical gay rights advocates, but the creative team was far more concerned with the climate in the country and the American theatre. Would audiences accept a story about two gay men? Additionally, Herman acknowledges the changes in the style of musical entertainment with the advent of Stephen Sondheim’s “cerebral” style and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s more operatic tendencies (230), so his concern was if his style had grown out of fashion.

The creative team of Herman, Laurents, and Fierstein truly worked as collaborators on the piece. The three men were equally passionate about the project and informed one another’s

specific area of expertise with personal insight. The team effort is most evident in the song “I Am What I Am”. Herman was so struck by the words “I am what I am” that Fierstein had written into the dialogue that he asked to use them for a song to end Act I. Upon first hearing Herman’s rendition of “I Am What I Am” the morning after he wrote it, Laurents exclaimed: “Here’s how I see it - on that last big, defiant note, Albin is going to rip off his wig and march right up the aisle of the theater and out the door onto Broadway!” (235). This sequence is exactly how it was staged on Broadway and became the iconic moment in the show.

The entire creative process, from writing to first performance, was a joy for Jerry. Everything seemed to fall into place effortlessly. The casting of George Hearn as Albin and Gene Barry as Georges was ideal. Hearn, who is straight, did not take issue with his need to dress as a woman. He accepted the role whole-heartedly and poured his heart and soul into each rehearsal and performance. This is evidence of the devotion the entire cast and creative team had to the project. The only questionable moment for the show came when it made the transition from previews in Boston to New York. With so much personal passion from each member of the creative team in the show, the time came to put it in front of their peers and the public for scrutiny. The team was very nervous about how the homosexual relationship in this show would play to a primarily straight audience, especially a conservative one, such as in Boston (240). Ultimately, the audience loved the show and the team was ready to take on Broadway.

From opening night on Broadway to the end of its run, the show was a huge success. Audiences loved it, and so did the critics. La Cage aux Folles won six Tony Awards in 1984, including Best Musical (242). “It would eventually join Dolly! and Mame in playing over 1,500 performances, making [Herman] the only composer-lyricist in American musical theatre history with that accomplishment” (243).

In addition to its life in the show, “I Am What I Am” is truly Jerry Herman’s ultimate contribution to society. After becoming a hit song for fans of La Cage, it became a popular disco song recorded by Gloria Gaynor, and as a result became an anthem for a portion of the gay community. Herman reflects on the impact of his work saying:

“I Am What I Am” is still Albin’s song. But now those words belong to every gay man in the world. And beyond that, those words belong to all of us - because that song is every human being’s expression of individuality” (Herman 236).

On a more personal note, Jerry also parallels Albin’s song to his own style of writing and comments that he has not changed his style to match the expectations of modern audiences. He does what he does and does it well and has been successful in doing so. He is what he is (236).

Following the success of La Cage aux Folles, Herman looked at the career and canon he had built and developed Jerry’s Girls, a revue of his music featuring female performers. This began a trend of performances created to showcase Herman’s work instead of developing new shows. There were television specials such as Jerry Herman’s Broadway, and numerous revivals of his work around the world on which Herman was happy to consult and coach. In the mid-1990’s, Herman began writing new material again. Still in contact with his first agent, Priscilla Morgan, she suggested he write something for television (Citron 265). It was decided he should write a holiday special and with such an admiration for women throughout his life, Herman settled on Santa’s better half. He wrote the score for a made-for-television movie, Mrs. Santa Claus, starring life-long friend, Angela Lansbury, and it has become a perennial family favorite. Further, Herman was contacted by a Las Vegas entrepreneur, Steve Wynn, who was interested in bringing a Jerry Herman musical to one of his properties. Herman and Wynn were both ecstatic about the project and Wynn was overly generous in financially supporting the creation and

development of the show. It would be called Miss Spectacular and in true Herman fashion, the show's central character would be female. In addition to the leading lady, Herman would finally have the opportunity to have the army of showgirls he had been waiting on since The Grand Tour. Unfortunately, Wynn sold all of his Las Vegas real estate and contracts. Miss Spectacular was written and set to be produced, but actually never made it past the concept album Herman arranged himself. This unfortunate series of events did not have a great effect on Jerry Herman. With a life and career full of so much happiness and success, he continues to enjoy his life and wait for a new project to spark his creative interest.

CHAPTER THREE: JERRY'S GIRLS

Angela Lansbury. Carol Channing. Sheila Mack. Carol Dorian. Phyllis Newman. Ruth Herman. There are many women who could call themselves “Jerry’s Girls.” To detail each relationship here would be a book; therefore, only the most pertinent relationships with key women in his life and their effect on his work will be explored.

With titles such as Hello, Dolly, Mame, Mrs. Santa Claus, and even Miss Spectacular contributing to a canon of work spanning more than fifty years, Jerry Herman makes no secret of his admiration for women. The majority of his works feature a strong-willed woman in one form or another; in the case of La Cage aux Folles, a man functions as the strong-willed female in a homosexual relationship. These female characters can find roots in many of Herman’s relationships with various women throughout his life.

Personal Relationships

Ruth Herman

Herman’s lifelong obsession with women, and music for that matter, can be attributed to factors before his birth. A major source for his happiness in his early years was his mother, Ruth, to whom his memoirs are dedicated. Her desire to pass her love of music to her child was evidenced even before Herman was born. “I grew up in a very warm, happy home that was full of music,” Herman wrote in his memoirs (Herman 2).

“According to my cousin Millicent, I got this gift [of music] when I was still in my mother’s womb. It was July 10, 1931, and Millicent, who was eleven years old at the time, was visiting our house when my mother suddenly started

going into labor. Everyone got very excited and started rushing her down the stairs and out the front door. But my mother stopped them and said, 'Just give me a minute.' She went into the living room, sat at her piano, and played a song.

My father, my grandmother, everybody was running around getting hysterical. Here was this woman with labor pains playing the piano. 'Ruth,' my grandmother said, 'please tell me why you are doing this to yourself.' And my cousin Millicent heard my mother say, 'I want my child to love music.'"(6).

As a possible result of her efforts before giving birth, Ruth would tell a story about finding her six-year old son playing the "Marines' Hymn" on the family piano "with two hands, no less," without sheet music (6). This "ability to hear a song [once] and transfer it instantly to [his] fingers," an ability claimed by Herman, may be another result of Ruth's actions before Jerry's birth (7).

He admittedly adored her, not only because she was his mother, but also because she was his best friend. In reference to his mother's effect on him, Herman asserts: "Ruth Herman was the first and maybe the most important of the influences that shaped me" (10). Regarding her influence on his musical future: "She was the real musician of the family" (7-8). Ruth loved music and encouraged Jerry to hone his skill. She suggested piano lessons during his childhood and later set up the meeting with Frank Loesser to explore his interest in composition. She was instrumental in his musical training, as well as his love of the art form:

"Whenever Jerry Herman's songwriting was accepted enthusiastically, his thoughts harked back to his mother, for it was she who had fostered his music, who had insisted that he study piano, who was never too busy to listen to his early work." (Citron 9)

He remembers her as "a great performer and a brilliant party-thrower and the most important influence in his life." Herman's exposure to his mother's performing skills was heard during her personal radio show as well as during family performances. Her effect on him was so great that he goes on to say, "[She] is in every song I write" (Herman 8).

One of Herman's best-known songs is "It's Today" from Mame. He has disclosed that the sole inspiration for this song came from his mother. He had been given the challenge of composing a song about a "glamorous woman who was *giving* this party" (8). He was immediately reminded of an early childhood memory:

"I remembered coming home from school -- I must have been seven or eight years old at the time -- and finding my mother in the kitchen, making these elaborate hors d'oeuvres for a party. Now, you have to understand that I grew up in a house of parties. My mother had her bridge club parties, and both she and my father had their Saturday night club parties. And they were always throwing these absolutely *mad* theme parties, with costumes and music and all kinds of wonderful food. I remembered saying to my mother: 'I didn't know we were having company tonight. It's only Tuesday, so what's the occasion?' And I remembered that she just smiled and said, 'It's today!'" (9)

The experience he gained talking to his parents' friends at such parties as a young boy became integral to his ability to function in social situations as an adult. These sophisticated women who young Herman was exposed to did not consciously influence his work, but he does not deny that there are probably "bits and pieces" of them throughout his canon (57). While these women were not necessarily in the hit parade of Herman's seminal relationships, Ruth's influence and social circle even subconsciously found their way into Herman's work.

As stated before, Herman came from an extraordinarily musical family. Herman recalls his father playing the saxophone and his mother playing both the piano and accordion. When he was able to join in after learning to play the piano, they formed a family trio as nightly family entertainment (2). While the entire family loved music, one is left to wonder why Harry would take issue with Jerry's interest in music as a career. He may have viewed it as a feminine quality or simply as financially unstable, but his opposition caused strain on his relationship with Jerry.

Ruth was ecstatic when Herman developed a passion for exploring his already promising musical abilities. His father, however, was not. Harry Herman was, in his son's words, "a real

rah-rah gym teacher of a father” (6). When Herman and his father differed in their values of the arts and athletics, Ruth was always there to defend her son’s artistic affinities. Ruth would say, “Leave the kid alone. Let him do what’s natural for *him* to do. He is finding his own way and he’s doing something wonderful” (11). This would diffuse the situation at the time, but it was not until years later that Harry fully accepted his son’s chosen profession.

In 1954, Herman’s mother passed away from cancer. This was the most devastating time of his life; he lost his friend, confidant, and inspiration. Ruth’s death seems to have created an emptiness in Herman’s life which he strives to fill with various women. Herman stopped everything in his life for the following year and was in perpetual mourning. His grief was so overpowering that his family and friends worried about his stability. He eventually worked through the loss with the help of many loved ones, but he spent the rest of his life trying to fill the void created by the loss of his mother. Herman seems to have a desire for a strong female figure in his life in Ruth’s absence, and he continues to seek such substantial relationships with women. One such relationship came immediately after Ruth’s passing in her sister, Belle.

While Ruth was unable to attend his Broadway shows, Aunt Belle saw every one. Her presence became a source of comfort and support for Herman, as at the opening night celebration for Milk and Honey. While this musical represented Herman’s first Broadway success, the opening night party was a more somber occasion for him than parties in the past because Ruth was not present to witness his triumph. He did have a good number of friends and family in the audience, including his grandmother, Aunt Belle, his father and his new wife, and all his mother’s closest friends. Life-long friend Carol Dorian was also by his side the entire evening. Herman invited these people because they reminded him of his mother and their presence was as close as he could get to having Ruth there with him. (54)

Phyllis Newman

It is possible Phyllis Newman held as much responsibility as Ruth for Jerry Herman's success in the theatre. Where Ruth supported and encouraged Herman to follow his dreams and see where his talent took him, Phyllis Newman was with Herman during some of the most important moments of his life, including major meetings and opening nights. As two kindred spirits who shared a love of music, the two developed a friendship during high school that has lasted a lifetime. Herman recalls their early relationship growing up in Jersey City as neighborhood friends:

“Phyllis lived four blocks from me and our families went to the same community center. She was a singer, she was beautiful, and she was a pal. We used to sit around and sing songs together after school. Phyllis and I had a pact. If she ever needed an accompanist to go to an audition, I would go with her, and if I ever needed a singer when I was playing my songs, she would go with me.” (18)

This pact secured Phyllis as Jerry's singer for his career-changing visit with Frank Loesser. Phyllis also was the female lead in the first musical Herman composed in his early teens, Step Right Up (22). She joined forces with Herman again on Nightcap as choreographer and even had a greater effect on the forthcoming Hello, Dolly! by introducing Charles Nelson Reilly to Herman in 1958. Reilly would originate the role of Cornelius Hackl in Hello Dolly! after his tenure with Nightcap (1958) and its expanded version called Parade (1960).

One may look at Phyllis's meddling spirit and see a bit of Dolly in her. Herman says that so many of his real-life relationships found their way into his work, and this may be one of those very instances. Dolly “puts [her] hand in” (Stewart 1-1-3) everyone else's business, and it is possible that Herman subconsciously saw a bit of Dolly in Phyllis. She put her hand in when introducing Reilly and Herman, and it ultimately gave Reilly a huge career boost.

Carol Dorian

Much like his relationship with Phyllis Newman, Carol Dorian was also a singer Jerry would accompany at the piano. Carol is the woman Herman considered to be his “best friend” for many years. They met on their first day of college at the University of Miami and remained friends for the next 40 years. Herman credits the fun and laughter they shared as the strength of their relationship: “[it] kept us young” (148).

Herman confesses he and Carol experienced an instant connection upon first meeting, and he considered them platonic soul mates. From strolls down Fifth Avenue in Manhattan to being Herman’s opening night date to the premiere of Milk and Honey, Carol was never far from Jerry’s side. Like Mame and Vera, Carol and Jerry were always bosom buddies. There was genuine caring and respect between the two of them. This familial kind of relationship of unconditional love between Carol and Jerry was a cornerstone of his adult life.

One may see yet another motherly figure in Herman’s life in Carol Dorian. They were so close that when Herman was given the task to compose three songs to pitch to producer David Merrick for Hello, Dolly!, he called Carol to tell her not to worry because he would not be calling over the weekend (64). The love and support shown between the two are definitely more than that of friends, and with such a desire for a strong female figure in his life in Ruth’s absence, Herman continued to seek such substantial relationships with women.

Herman survived the Dolly! rehearsal process, and the Dorians were his guests to the opening night party for the show (91). Their relationship became even more solid when Carol and Bob decided to ask Jerry to be the godfather of their daughter, Jane, and later, her daughter, Sarah. When Carol passed away in 1992, Herman was devastated and says he “still feel[s] the

shock of losing his best friend” (254). Herman cites this event among the most devastating in his life, next to his mother’s death nearly 40 years earlier.

Sheila Mack

Where Carol Dorian was Herman’s closest personal friend, Sheila Mack blurs the line between his closest personal and professional relationships. Sheila has really become Herman’s life-long companion. Herman biographer Stephen Citron bills Sheila as Herman’s “secretary/cook/major domo, confidante, and friend for most of his life (Citron ix). She is the first person he sees when he wakes up in the morning, usually bringing breakfast, and the last person he sees at night, often after lengthy conversations. Sheila has been witness to Jerry’s highest and lowest points and, as a result, is very close to the center of Herman’s inner circle of relationships.

When Herman was flying home after becoming ill on a vacation, Sheila and Carol Dorian rushed to meet him at the airport. He was diagnosed with hepatitis. Herman was hospitalized for the next two months, and Sheila spearheaded his recovery and did not leave his side during the entire ordeal (Herman 139). With such an intimate relationship with Herman, Sheila has become yet another surrogate mother figure in his life and continues to be to this day.

Where most children would share pivotal moments and leisure time with their parents, Herman was not afforded such a luxury. He did, however, share many of these experiences with Sheila Mack. After caring for Herman while recovering from hepatitis, Sheila and Jerry went on a vacation to celebrate the success of Mame. She introduced him to her friend, George, which began Herman’s first serious romantic relationship that lasted three years. Not that Ruth Herman

would have played “matchmaker”, but Dolly definitely would have put her hand in yet again. Ruth also undoubtedly would have been overjoyed at her son’s happiness in a relationship.

Sheila also was with Herman when he saw the original film La Cage aux Folles and vowed to make it his next project. One easily could see Ruth in the theatre with Herman if she were still alive at the time, since Jerry’s relationship with his mother was such a strong friendship at its roots. Interestingly, Sheila may be viewed as a bit of Albin in Herman’s real life. Her devotion has never wavered. She has been by his side and supported him through their entire life together. Luckily, however, there has been no betrayal between the two of them as with Albin’s family. One might see Albin’s devotion to his family in Sheila’s devotion to Jerry. The unyielding support and devotion to Herman has given Sheila a very special place in his life.

Professional Relationships

Where Sheila bridges the gap between Herman’s personal and professional relationships, Carol Channing and Angela Lansbury represent his strongest professional relationships. Herman’s leading ladies are far more than the headliners of his Broadway productions. In many cases, they become life-long friends.

During the original Broadway run of Hello, Dolly!, it was customary for Herman to teach the score of the show to each star who would assume the role. As a result of this saturated time together, Herman became very well-acquainted with each. In addition to teaching each performer the score, he would make it a point to visit the theatre on a regular basis to check on the cast. When both Hello, Dolly! and Mame were playing, Herman would visit the Winter Garden Theatre to see the ”Mame” number and then walk over to see the “Dolly!” number at the

St. James. He then would catch up with his leading ladies on all the cast gossip (137). This became Herman's social circle.

It is very interesting to note the impact Hello, Dolly! and Mame had on Herman's career and personal life. These shows positioned him at the top of his field and also afforded him the luxury of becoming acquainted with two women who became life-long friends: Carol Channing and Angela Lansbury.

Carol Channing

Carol Channing came to Herman during what he considers to be one of the most miserable times of his life (67). Herman calls her the "reward for going through all the *sturm und drang* of Hello, Dolly!" (154). She has become one of his closest friends, a surrogate sister. Their time together has been filled with laughter and good conversation as well as key business decisions. Their relationship solidified on day one when Carol came in to learn the score to Hello, Dolly!. After being introduced to Herman, Carol said, "I hope this won't upset you, Mr. Herman, because a composer usually hears his songs being sung in a certain way. But you know, I sing lower than the men in your show." Herman was not upset at all and began reworking the keys of the songs around Carol's range, altering pitches occasionally to make her comfortable vocally. This act of good will established a trust between the two of them that continues to this day. In fact, it was Carol who encouraged Herman to mount the 30th-anniversary tour of Hello, Dolly!, (1995) in which she starred.

Angela Lansbury

Just as Carol Channing was Herman's strength during the Hello, Dolly! debacle, Angela Lansbury shared his joy during the creation of Mame. Herman did not even wait until after the audition to strike up a friendship with Angela. Instead, he was an integral part in securing the role for her. In an effort to find additional women to audition for the role of Mame, Herman combed through the Playbills he had collected over the years and discovered Angela Lansbury's biography in the bill for Stephen Sondheim's Anyone Can Whistle (1964) (124). This was one of the shows Herman had seen as a result of the time he spent with his parents in the theatre, so, in a way, Ruth Herman's influence continued into Jerry's present.

Herman staged Lansbury's audition from beginning to end for the producers. He and Lansbury agreed Herman would stay seated in the house while the other women who were being considered sang. When it was Lansbury's turn, Herman would excuse himself and sneak down to the piano. She would then sing two songs from the show Herman had taught her previously so the producers could really see her in the role (125-6).

After securing the role, Lansbury went on to collaborate with Herman on several other projects including Dear World and more recently Mrs. Santa Claus. Lansbury has been with Herman through the happiest of times as well as some of the more challenging. She comforted him when he lost dear friends, including Carol Dorian, and was one of his visitors during his time in the hospital with hepatitis.

All these women seem to be filling a void for Herman created at age 21 with the loss of his mother, Ruth. Throughout his life, Herman has surrounded himself with strong women and created lasting relationships with them. Herman casually states: "I'm sure it has something to do

with my being an only child and a mama's boy and gay and all that" (148). And it probably does, but these women have taken a place in Herman's life that might rival a mother and son relationship under different circumstances.

The loss of his mother was admittedly an important event in his life, and the depth of loss he felt emphasizes the weight his mother held in his life. She was not only a friend but a supporter during the early years of his artistic development when his father was opposed to such endeavors. Upon her passing, he found other women to support him, but Herman has consistently sought friendships in which he uses the terms "best friends" and "adore" often. These terms are usually reserved for one or two relationships in one's life, but Herman uses the terms loosely. Throughout his memoirs, he refers to all the aforementioned women as his "best friend" at least one time. This may be a simple moment of reflection when the author is referring to them as his "best friend" at the time, but to use such superlatives in excess could intimate that Herman is unconsciously looking to fill the chasm created by the loss of his mother with surrogate maternal figures after her passing.

In addition to his personal and professional relationships, Herman has consistently been drawn to create strong female characters for the Broadway productions he creates. This might be interpreted as Herman creating his idealized woman as an amalgam of the women in his personal and professional life. Herman makes no secret of the song "It's Today" from Mame being inspired by his mother's actions very early in his life, but is Mame herself an idealized mother figure for Herman? Is "My Best Girl" a personal letter to Ruth Herman from her adoring son? It is the belief of the author, absolutely. Herman's devotion to all these women is integral to his life. The idea that so many traits are manifested in his work supports the argument that his personal life has greatly impacted his career and contribution to the musical theatre.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCRIPT AND SCORE ANALYSIS

This chapter will isolate the four songs I performed in It's Today!: An Evening of Jerry Herman. Each song analysis will begin with a brief history of the show from which the song was drawn. I will then explore the situation and function of each character I portrayed and then discuss the function of each song within the show from which it came followed by how it functioned within our revue. Each section will conclude with an in-depth analysis of the script and score for each song.

“Put On Your Sunday Clothes”

Brief History

For all his success throughout his career, Herman attests: “On my tombstone they are going to say: ‘He Wrote *Hello, Dolly!*’ That’s it...” (Herman 67). That may very well be the case, but with good reason; Herman’s score and Michael Stewart’s book have been etched into the Broadway history books since the show premiered in 1964. Since sweeping the 1964 Tony Awards (10 wins, including Best Musical), Hello, Dolly! has become one of the most beloved and performed musicals throughout the world in professional, community, and educational theatre venues. Its timeless exploration of love through humor and music make the story a favorite for all ages and pertinent to all time periods.

Based on Thornton Wilder’s play, The Matchmaker (1955), Hello, Dolly! chronicles Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi’s efforts to marry Horace Vandergelder of Yonkers, New York. An elaborate scheme of trickery and manipulation, with Dolly at the helm, develops throughout the

piece and culminates at the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant in New York City. Dolly maneuvers Vandergelder's employees, Cornelius and Barnaby, as well as his niece, Ermengarde, and her fiancé, Ambrose, to be part of her plan before leaving Yonkers. She later manages to involve his current love interest, Mrs. Irene Malloy, and her associate, Minnie Fay, as well.

The majority of the action occurs in New York as Dolly introduces Cornelius to Mrs. Malloy and Barnaby to Minnie Fay. And, as to be expected in a show whose central character is a matchmaker, both couples are destined to fall in love in the end, which they do. Throughout the piece, Dolly keeps a close watch on Vandergelder and manipulates him like a puppet to make him fall in love with her. The action reaches its climax at the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant where Dolly has arranged for everyone to arrive for dinner on the same evening. Antics ensue involving all the aforementioned couples crossing paths and trying to remain incognito in an attempt not to reveal their presence to one another. Ultimately, Dolly saves the day and manages to avoid any trouble with the law as a result of the group's antics at the Harmonia Gardens. Following the trial, Dolly and Vandergelder are married, as are the other three couples.

Character Situation

One could argue the sole purpose of any other character besides the leading lady in a Jerry Herman musical is to support the leading lady. All of Herman's successful shows center around a strong female lead, and Hello, Dolly! features Herman's masterpiece. Regarding Cornelius Hackl, Herman gives he and Dolly little stage time together; however, one cannot appreciate Cornelius's situation without acknowledging Dolly's part in creating it.

In Hello, Dolly!, Cornelius Hackl is a man of 33 who has become weighed down by the monotony in his life. He has worked in the same town at the same feed store for the same

miserable boss for as long as he can remember and longs for a life of excitement and spontaneity. The song, “Put On Your Sunday Clothes,” is the first scene in which Cornelius appears, and it does a flawless job of setting up his predicament. Cornelius uses the song to paint a beautiful picture of possibilities beyond Yonkers in an attempt to get his work associate and friend, Barnaby, onboard for a scheme to close the store when their boss, Horace Vandergelder, is away. He suggests they take the train to New York for a day of fun.

Character Function

Cornelius’s function within the show can be credited to Dolly. He is yet another beneficiary of her matchmaking. He and Mrs. Malloy are another couple to her credit and, as mentioned before, support the leading lady’s personal story. In addition to Minnie Fay and Barnaby, Ermengarde and Ambrose, and ultimately, Dolly and Horace Vandergelder, the entire musical is set up to showcase the talents of Dolly, Herman’s quintessential leading lady.

In addition to the title character, Hello, Dolly! includes another strong female character who primarily interacts with Cornelius and shares a good deal of his stage time: Irene Malloy. Dolly Levi is not the only strong female in Hello, Dolly!. Mrs. Malloy also possesses a good deal of strength that plays well against Cornelius’s naivety and sometimes stupidity. The time period of the show is early 20th-century America, not a time when many women owned their own business. Mrs. Malloy has managed to create a viable business in a society that might not have supported such an endeavor. This is a testament to her strength of character and perseverance. Mrs. Malloy also demonstrates her negotiating skills when she prompts Cornelius to open his own feed store to compete with Vandergelder’s.

Cornelius's function is to showcase the strength of each of these women. Dolly is able to convince him to do just as she desires in order to achieve her own goal of marrying Horace Vandergelder. She even improves Cornelius's life by introducing him to Mrs. Malloy and suggesting he become a business partner of Vandergelder in the end. Her ability to affect the lives of so many people in a positive way is a testament to her strength of character. Mrs. Malloy's ability to support herself in a society where such a lifestyle was quite uncommon, exemplifies her personal strength. Cornelius acts as the means by which both these strong women further the tradition of Jerry Herman's strong leading ladies.

In addition to showcasing Herman's leading ladies, Cornelius also provides a window into Dolly's effect on the younger generation of lovers. This ultimately supports her own strength, but one must give Cornelius and the younger characters the credit for providing her this outlet. Through their relationships, the audience is able to see how Dolly's way of creating relationships is not only limited to the older generation or that her methods are out of fashion. Cornelius and Mrs. Malloy's relationship shows how Dolly's time-honored way of courtship is still applicable to modern relationships and provides a strong support for the show's continued production around the world.

Song Function Within The Play

Within Hello, Dolly!, "Put On Your Sunday Clothes" functions as the transitional song from Yonkers to New York. The song begins with Cornelius expounding the virtues of any place other than Yonkers to Barnaby. This helps to get Barnaby excited about Cornelius's idea of closing down the store and taking the train to New York. We learn how excited they both are at the prospect of a change in their routine. The song then features Dolly, who is preparing

Ermengarde and Ambrose for the train station. She sings about the importance of looking your best for the “new world” they are about to enter. The entire town then joins in the excitement, and the song ends with everyone on the train to New York, just as Dolly has arranged. This is yet another testament to her strength as a character. She can influence people to do exactly what she wants them to do without showing much effort on her part—a true professional. She takes charge of a situation and tells the listener whatever he/she wants to hear to get them to do as she desires.

Song Function Within the Revue

Within the revue, we were performing the song in a different manner. We only sang the opening portion where Cornelius inspires Barnaby to take part in his plan and the first two verses. This small group atmosphere gave the song a different sound and end result. Instead of the entire company joining in, we saw Mrs. Malloy and Cornelius join together by the end, as well as Barnaby and Minnie Fay. Dolly is appropriately left alone as Horace is not a part of this number, nor has their relationship gone beyond contracted employee and employer at this point in the plot of Hello, Dolly!. Additionally, the characters were not even established in our performance, which might have led the audience to the assumption that we were any young couples.

Instead of being the inciting event that puts all of Act II into motion in Hello, Dolly!, I saw our performance as a sort of “highlights” version of Act II. The audience saw Cornelius’s and Barnaby’s excitement and hope. We then saw Dolly’s perspective, which leads to the two couples uniting. The portion of the plot that involves these four characters at the hand of Dolly was summed up by the end of our performance. If the audience was able to take the character

relationships from our performance, all the better; but it was not a necessity. The simple presence of excitement and young romance was sufficient.

Regarding vocal production during our performance, one challenge I encountered was producing the high G on “listen, Barnaby” (Stewart 15). The issue arose in that that pitch was on an extreme note for me, and it was on a small vowel, [I]. To assist me in producing the proper pitch, I employed a technique learned from the Estill Voice System. I made it a point to engage other muscles in my body to take the pressure off my voice, which allowed the sound to flow freely. I included a slap on Barnaby’s shoulder to encourage force into my shoulder and back as opposed to holding it in my larynx. This tool aided in a consistent and safe vocal production during all performances.

Analysis of Script and Score

The first element that strikes the listener during the opening of “Put On Your Sunday Clothes” is the speech-like quality of the music. Each phrase has a lovely rise and fall in pitch as well as emphasis. The notes ascend to the middle of the phrase and then descend, slowing the rhythm as they reach the end. An interesting note about the pitches themselves is that in measure nine, the first accidental of the piece is introduced on the word “slick.” Up to this point, the range of pitches has not exceeded the ascending/descending major sixth from D-sharp to B-natural. The word “slick,” referring to New York City, is given the pitch D-natural, which is not only a minor third above what had been the highest note in the piece but is also the lowered leading tone of the key. This gives an added sense of color to the note which adds additional meaning to the New York City reference. It establishes New York as new, exciting, and different from the monotony to which they have grown accustomed in Yonkers.

The second statement of this material is repeated a perfect fourth higher, which increases the sense of passion and intensity. This time, the same intervallic relationships are present, but the altered tone in measure 17 is now used to get Barnaby's attention after closing his eyes. It is interesting that an unaltered melodic phrase, with the exception of key, can have multiple meanings within the same song.

The melody itself is introduced in measure 21. It is simple and, as to be expected from Jerry Herman, quite memorable. The beginning of each four measure phrase that makes up the verse starts with repeated D's that ascend with the excitement Cornelius is feeling. The first phrase ends on A natural, the second on C natural (down the octave) and lastly leaps to D natural. The low C may simply be a way of increasing the contrast between the C and following D. The final four bar phrase sees the melody move in ascending and descending triads until ending on the highest note of the piece, E natural, which echoes the characters' joy and aspirations.

The second verse begins in exactly the same manner as the first; however, instead of three statements of the initial four bar phrase beginning with repeated D's, we only hear two. The ascending/descending triad pattern is then heard three times as before. The difference between the first and second verses regarding the triad pattern is that the first verse goes back and forth starting on C-sharp, then B-natural, and returning to C-sharp. The second verse phrases begin on B-natural, move to C-sharp, and then up again to D-natural, ending the phrase on high E as before. This difference in melodic motion echoes the building confidence of the characters as they become more and more wrapped up in their plan. The final four bars of my portion of the song are simultaneous thirds between Cornelius and Barnaby. We end on a unison D-natural and then move up a half step to establish the new key of E-major for Dolly's entrance.

Following Dolly's verse, Mrs. Malloy and Minnie Fay enter and sing of how happy their Sunday clothes make them feel. Everyone is getting more and more excited about getting dressed up and heading to the big city. A sense of increased confidence is heard throughout the entire piece as all the characters join together to finish the song on the final eight bars which reiterate the ascending/descending triad pattern mentioned before. Harmony was added in the final four bars to add aural variety as well as assist lower voices from straining due to the raised key from D to E earlier in the song.

"Marianne"

Brief History

The Grand Tour is Herman's most forgotten piece of work; very few people have ever heard of the show. After opening on Broadway in 1979 and running 61 performances, little has been mentioned of the show since. Some may credit the difficult subject matter of Nazism as a reason for its failure; still others may blame other, more successful shows that opened during the same season, including Sondheim's Sweeney Todd, as part of the issue. However, no one has raised the question of the central character as a reason for the show's failure. The show has two central characters, neither of whom is a woman. This could very easily be the reason the show never enjoyed commercial success. Herman confesses: "I have to say that I never had a passion for the piece, and I think it shows (Herman 217). This lack of passion for the show may have had roots in the fact that there was no strong leading lady to hold the show together. Herman did not have a "Ruth" to write for on this project. The closest character that might be categorized as a signature "Jerry Herman Leading Lady" in The Grand Tour is Marianne. This only would be

by default because she has the largest role played by a woman in the show, not because she is the central/title character. However, this is not to say she is unimportant. Marianne plays an integral role in the plot, but her involvement was not such that she could join the ranks of Dolly, Mame, or Zaza. Herman is famous for his leading ladies, and The Grand Tour omitted the key ingredient to his success.

The show, as it was presented on opening night, was based on S.N. Behrman's play, Jacobowsky and the Colonel (1944). Herman attempted to revise the show with a remount in 1996 but still enjoyed no major success. The show conveys the story of a Polish-Jewish intellectual, Jacobowsky, and an anti-Semitic aristocrat, Stjerbinsky, otherwise known as the Colonel. The two men meet at a hotel in Paris with a conundrum: Jacobowsky has a car and no knowledge of how to operate it and Stjerbinsky has no car but a need to travel. The two unite to escape the encroaching Nazi regime. The remainder of the show is spent traveling across Europe avoiding the Nazis to deliver intelligence for the Polish government.

It is at the first stop on their "grand tour" that we meet Marianne. She is the Colonel's love interest, and he awakens her from slumber by singing "Marianne". She becomes quite necessary to their journey when she agrees to sew the Colonel's papers inside her hat for safekeeping. The car that Jacobowsky purchased lasts long enough to get them to Marianne. They then decide to stow away on a train to get to their next destination. A series of mishaps ensue involving the characters working at the Carnival Manzoni, and Jacobowsky convinces an SS Captain that he, Jacobowsky, is a human cannonball. He replaces himself with a dummy in the cannon to outsmart the Captain, and their "grand tour" proceeds towards England.

The Colonel, Jacobowsky, Marianne, and Szabuniewicz, the Colonel's sidekick, get closer to their destination only to be met by the Nazis. The characters are informed, by an ally of

the Polish government, of a new meeting place to which they must travel, and they begin their journey to 23 Rue Mace, which happens to be a convent. The Germans intercept them, but the Colonel kills an SS Captain and is able to make his delivery.

Throughout their journey, Jacobowsky finds himself falling for the lovely Marianne. She is able to talk sense into the Colonel, who tends to think with his heart instead of his brain. This is a testament to her function as one of Jerry Herman's signature "strong leading ladies". She is independent and able to impart wisdom to the Colonel in moments of great passion that may jeopardize the success of their mission. This vivacity draws Jacobowsky to Marianne, but not without concern from the Colonel. It is not until some reflection that the Colonel begins to see his similarity to Jacobowsky. In the end, the two have a great respect and admiration for one another, exemplifying the Colonel's journey from brash overgrown child to mature adult with the help of Jacobowsky and Marianne.

Character Situation

In The Grand Tour, Colonel Tadeusz Boleslav Stjerbinsky is “magnificent in his uniform, tall, commanding, aristocratic, electric with vitality, euphoric with a sense of his own immemorial authority in the scheme of things,” according to the script (Stewart 5). With a close read, he can be interpreted as a brash man who always gets what he wants through having a heart of gold. He is a man of great heart, but not always the most intelligent. He works for the Polish government and is embarking on a mission to deliver papers that will provide the government the intelligence they need to uncover a number of spies in Poland. He has vowed to deliver the papers to the exiled Polish government in England.

Character Function

The Colonel functions as the antithesis to Jacobowsky. They are perceived as polar opposites at the opening of the show. It is not necessarily the central conflict in the script, but Jacobowsky is of Jewish decent and the Colonel is quite anti-Semitic. This tension adds to the disdain and hesitancy in their initial meeting. Jacobowsky’s intellect serves to keep him much more even tempered than the overly passionate Colonel. Their personal differences become elements of personal respect by the end of the piece. The Colonel concedes that he and Jacobowsky have several things in common. In Act 2, Scene 6, Jacobowsky confesses, “I have learned to admire you, Colonel.” To which the Colonel replies, “And I have learned to love you, Jacobowsky” (Grand 65) Despite their differences, their common goal has taught both of them the value of different perspectives in life.

The Colonel also functions as comic relief within the show. He makes several comments that ease the tension of the subject at hand, namely the Nazi takeover of Europe during World War II. Act I, scene 5 finds Marianne and the Colonel in an argument over Jacobowsky's relationship with her, and the Colonel asks her to "swear on bible? *Correct* bible?" (Grand 31) that she will never break his heart. This is one of many moments of nationalist humor found throughout that depends on the World War II atmosphere for its comic effect.

Song Function Within the Play

In The Grand Tour, the function of "Marianne" is quite simple. The Colonel arrives to visit her and sings outside her window until she awakens. This scene is quite touching but, beyond shedding some light on the Colonel's perception of the character before the audience meets her, the song does little to advance the plot.

In its second hearing, however, when reprised by Jacobowsky, we not only learn of his growing sense of care for Marianne, but we also see the first indication of unity between him and the Colonel. The linking of these two opposing characters through song is a lovely way of conveying their inner feelings, as well as planting a seed of what is to come. Scott McMillan explores this idea in The Musical As Drama where he identifies such instances of shared musical material as the characters' "project[ing] themselves in this music" (McMillan 71). This not only links them aurally, but emotionally and mentally as well. Not only are they experiencing similar feelings, but they are expressing the exact same thoughts which further their connection. This foreshadows their reunion at the end of the piece and cements their respect for one another.

Song Function Within the Revue

The Colonel's rendition of "Marianne" is decidedly more operatic than Jacobowsky's. For the revue, I opted to portray Jacobowsky's point of view instead of the Colonel's. It was better suited for my voice. The song is simple, and the use of an overly powerful voice distracts from the beauty of the text and melody. This conclusion is drawn from what type of actor would need to be cast as the Colonel in any production, according to his description in the script, not just the original production. He is a brash, over-the-top character from Poland. To be true to the character, one must look at his personality when casting. Jacobowsky is an intellectual and is far more introspective. His interpretation of the song is more in line with my preferred performance style: introspective and heartfelt.

While Jacobowsky does not sing the entire song or the first verse in The Grand Tour, as I did in the revue, his intention and perspective are just as valid at any point in the piece. His interpretation is a window into his character just as with the Colonel. The Colonel's boisterous character lends itself to a more operatic sound, where Jacobowsky's more thoughtful and quiet character conveys the same music and lyrics with an entirely different message.

It should be understood that "Marianne" is considered the Colonel's song. Jacobowsky only sings a portion of the lyric and melody in the show. My personal performance choice was made with the "cabaret" style performance venue in mind, not to rewrite the song from Jacobowsky's perspective. My intention was to use it as a starting point for alternative interpretation.

Script/Score Analysis

“Marianne” is a simple song. Within The Grand Tour, it has a simple function, to enumerate the attributes of the Colonel’s love interest. This being the case, the song itself does not feature any intricate or complex elements. The melody is simple, in C major, and there are very few accidentals. The song’s introduction acquaints the audience with the melodic material which outlines the C major triad and ends, before the singer enters, on a G7 chord. This gives a strong tonic to dominant relationship early in order to establish key and mood.

The singer begins on the same chord structure heard in the introduction, this time further developed. Measures five through seven are decidedly C major. An F sharp is introduced on beat three of measure eight, which pushes into the dominant, G. This is not a key change, only a short tonicization, or short change of key center, for variety. The longest note of the piece comes in measures 11 to 12 and 19 to 20 on the word “Marianne”. The use of this word is what prompts a new harmonic idea to be introduced. The mere mention of her name prompts dynamic feelings inside the character as well as in the music.

We then return to C major for the second verse. When approaching her name again, in measures 19 and 20, we hear a B flat major chord, which is the secondary dominant of the four chord in C major. This causes the predetermined melody to be altered as well. At first hearing, “Marianne” was held out on a G. This time with the new harmony the same relationship between melody and accompaniment is achieved, but a step higher on A.

With the introduction of a secondary dominant (V/IV), the piece is forced to move through IV, which is F major in the third verse. We are then given quite a treat when Herman borrows a flat six harmony in measures 24 through 26. A six chord in a major key is minor, so

to alter the sonority of what is expected, the composer borrows a major chord built off scale degree six, which exists in the parallel minor, C. This is why we hear a descending major triad in measures 24 and 25 consisting of E flat, C, and A flat, the bass of the chord. The flat six chord's resolution can be found in measure 27 when we return to G major. The presence of the flat six harmony really pushes the harmony back to five, as flat pitches resolve down by step in common practice.

The fourth verse returns to C major in measure 29. In measure 32, Herman opts to include a D9 chord on the second syllable of “vanilla”. This adds a sweetness to the song as well as introduces the leading tone (F sharp) to the dominant (G). This gives a strong dominant to tonic sound before the end of the piece, which concludes in C major.

As far as text goes, the Colonel uses the basic senses (excluding taste) as comparative bench marks regarding Marianne. For sound, he compares her to a cello; for sight, he uses the colors silver, violet, and yellow. For touch, he uses the precious stones garnets and pearls; and for smell, ginger, lime and vanilla. All these attributes are then compared to a single kiss from Marianne, which may be indicative of taste (in an attempt to include all five senses).

“I Won’t Send Roses”

Brief History

Mack and Mabel debuted on Broadway in 1974, directed by Gower Champion and starring Robert Preston as Mack and Bernadette Peters as Mabel. The book was written by Michael Stewart and the music and lyrics by Jerry Herman. The original Broadway production did not enjoy critical or audience success and closed after only 66 performances; however,

subsequent productions, especially in Britain (1995), have been quite well received. *Variety* toted the 1995 London production:

“The overture of "Mack and Mabel" sets the heart racing, and for as long as the characters are singing, the show does, too. In one number after another, composer Jerry Herman delivers a classically brash and brassy score reminiscent of a musical theater shorn both of operatic pretense and intellectual angst” (*Variety*).

The show chronicles the chaotic relationship between famed movie producer Mack Sennett and his muse, star Mabel Normand. The show is organized in a series of flashbacks beginning with their introduction on his movie set through Mabel’s rise to stardom to, in the original production, her death. Through these scenes, the audience is given glimpses of the dysfunction throughout the relationship, but also the shared desire for an ideal life together. The characters are simply unable to reach this utopian state due to their humanity and personal demons. In Mack’s case, these flaws include pride and obsession with his work; for Mabel, insecurity and a need for attention.

Following the Broadway production, the book was altered and the ending changed. This did a good deal to change critical and audience perception in subsequent productions. Instead of Mabel dying in the end, Mack produces a final picture for her knowing it will fail and he will lose everything. This rewritten ending creates a much more endearing character for Sennett and brings a good deal of heart to the relationship not seen in the original production.

Character Situation

Mack is a hard, rough-hewn person with no need for romance. He knows Mabel deserves all the things he will not give her and only wants her to have the lifestyle he feels is appropriate for someone like her: roses, chocolates, compliments, etc. This is not to say Mack is incapable of sending roses or being romantic. He is at a different stage of life and claims he has grown past these “frivolous” expressions of love. He is an established man who has made himself everything he is and sees no need for extraneous activity such as showing love or caring. His movies are his true love, his obsession. He does not have any interest in involving another person in his life. He has everything he needs and wants.

The scene directly preceding “I Won’t Send Roses” reveals Mack and Mabel on the observation platform of a train and later in her compartment. Mack opens the scene in the present recalling this as the moment he fell in love with Mabel: “I didn’t have brains enough to figure it out till too many years later but it was that night for me” (Stewart 20). He then enters the scene in flashback and interacts with Mabel playfully, as a school boy. They compare poems they had composed: his from when he was six; hers from that very evening. This scene establishes Mack’s emotional persona. At this point in the story, we only have seen the harsh task master of a movie maker driving his staff to perfection. This is a great contrast from his and Mabel’s first meeting when she came to the set to deliver a sandwich. Mack has seen the glimmer in her eyes, but seems to be avoiding intimacy with her. He knows he loves her, but he perceives his love not the kind she deserves.

Mack is at the height of his career. He is the studio head and is in charge of each picture. Act I, Scene 3 reveals Mack’s level of control on his set. Mack has altered the script to include

Mabel riding a horse at the end of the picture instead of being thrown from it. The writer angrily addresses Mack, who is unfazed by his antics. In this scene, Mack has full control of all production aspects, whether appropriate or not. This need for control may be the reason Mack avoids an intimate relationship with Mabel, or anyone for that matter. Relinquishing control to another in a healthy relationship is not something Mack feels capable of doing.

Mack makes his case honestly and concisely: he is not the one for her. Mabel insists they give it a chance by pretending to be married for one night, but Mack escapes her compartment, thinking the train has reached its destination. In fact, it has not, but Mack uses the commotion he hears as a reason to escape the uncomfortable situation with no regard for Mabel's feelings.

Character Function

Within the musical, Mack is the central character, telling the audience the story in retrospect. He offers commentary on the action, as in Act I, Scene 2 when he clasps his hand over Mabel's mouth to tell the audience about Mabel's eyes. This convention is very cinematic, allowing a character to stop time.

The show is constructed around Mack's recollection of his relationship with Mabel over the years. When the play opens, she has already died, and Mack has returned to his studio that has been sold. Throughout the piece, we see his personality does not change as a result of his time with Mabel. He is as rough and mean at the end as at the beginning of the show. He does, however, allow his softer side to emerge when he is around Mabel. The final scene of the piece reveals his true desire to marry her, and he confesses he would, given the opportunity. He cites the movies as a window to the past and his way of keeping Mabel alive: "As long as there's a projector and a foot of film and a screen up there to show it on she's alive! And young! And

beautiful!” (Stewart 61). He then makes the movie of how he would have staged their wedding, complete with squirting flowers and custard pies and his famous Keystone Kops. His fantasy is finally realized. He knows he should have allowed himself to love her, but he was too selfish and proud to compromise his facade of strength.

Song Function Within the Play

The function of “I Won’t Send Roses” in the show is simple. Mack uses the song to tell Mabel how inappropriate a relationship with him would be. He does not deny his feelings for her, but he admits he will not be one to romanticize their life together. He is a man of business who wants to focus solely on his career. Within the musical, he goes to embrace her during the song but is interrupted when she states she needs a ring if they are going to play married for the evening. They embrace, and Mack continues detailing why she should not love him. He does not stop to think of what she is looking for in a partner, yet another indication of his selfishness. This scene is a glimpse into the relationship between Mack and Mabel. Constant tension and opposing goals are prevalent throughout and ultimately responsible for the relationship’s failure.

Song Function Within the Revue

Since the lyrics are so specific to the situation, I chose to sing the song in the context of the show. To physicalize Mack’s closed-off personality, I put my hands in my pockets for the duration of the performance. In our production, I did not have a scene partner to use until the last line when Melissa Mason joined me onstage; this led me to use direct address toward the audience for the majority of the performance. A person who spends their entire life pushing others away also would have trouble making eye contact for long periods of time, so changing

focus to include other sections of the audience was acceptable. I chose to change focus each time the pronoun beginning each phrase changed: “I won’t send roses...”, “My heart is too much in control...” etc. This also worked well since we performed on a thrust stage and had to play to two sides.

A major challenge with this song was not performing the entire piece within our revue. I only sang the first statement of the entire lyric, 32 bars. This omits Mack’s extended list of negative attributes as well as the re-statement of the title phrase, “I won’t send roses, and roses suit you so”. This pared-down version left me with a couple of challenges as to how to perform the song. Do I try to make the complete journey of the character in the allotted 32 bars by creating more business than is really necessary in the opening section of the piece? Or do I simply state the lyrics as written and allow them to speak for themselves? I opted for the latter. This option allowed me to explore Mack’s disinterest in developing a romantic relationship with Mabel; however, he still acknowledges she is worthy of such treatment. The line “and roses suit you so” is a bittersweet sentiment, indicating he would love to offer her roses, but cannot bring himself to do so.

Script/Score Analysis

The song as a whole has a simple two verse structure. Each verse consists of 32 bars ending with “I won’t send roses, and roses suit you so”. The melody is simply constructed as well. It does not explore the extremes of the performer’s range. From an exclusively musical standpoint, some may say the song sits low since there are low G’s, but with examination of the character, this range would be appropriate because Mack’s voice should reflect his rough character.

A challenge I encountered was finding the appropriate balance of speak-singing. I found myself having trouble with the lower pitches when I was trying to “sing” them and discovered much greater success when I spoke-sang the first three pitches and then did the same for the aforementioned low G. This diminished the effort on my part, allowing the voice to relax into the lower register instead of having to work to reach it. The relaxation aided in changing from a mixed voice production to full chest voice for the low G.

One very interesting aspect of the writing is the instances of leaps in the melodic line corresponding with emphasis in speech. Lower leaps, such as from the first to second syllables of “roses”, echo the leaps in pitch one would hear in normal speech. The first syllable is stressed and the second is not. As a result, Herman writes the first syllable on a higher pitch than the second and emphasizes the speech quality by leaping down a major sixth to the second syllable. The same can be said for “guaranteed”, but used in the opposition. Here, the final syllable is stressed and Herman leaps to the highest note in the entire phrase, D-natural. Not only does this stress the appropriate syllable of the word but also stresses the word as a whole, giving it more emphasis overall.

“I Am What I Am”

Brief History

La Cage aux Folles is Jerry Herman’s most recent production to premiere on Broadway (1983). The show is based on the play of the same name by Jean Poiret (1973). Herman was inspired to write the musical after seeing the 1978 film version of Poiret’s play. George Hearn and Gene Barry played the central couple, Albin and Georges, to critical and audience acclaim

on Broadway. The production won six of the nine Tony awards for which it was nominated in 1984, including Best Musical. Since its initial four-year run, the show has enjoyed several revivals both on Broadway and in London's West End, including one planned for Broadway in 2010.

The show follows the story of Albin and Georges's relationship and the strain they experience when their son, Jean Michel, informs them of his approaching marriage. Jean-Michel's fiancée, Anne, is the daughter of an ultra-conservative politician, Edouard Dindon, who would never approve of his daughter becoming part of a homosexual couple's family. The major conflict arises when Jean-Michel and Georges plan to keep the Dindon's visit a secret from Albin in an effort to disguise their living situation. Additionally, Georges and Albin own the nightclub, La Cage aux Folles, which they live above and produce the premier drag show on the French Riviera "...starring the one and only Zaza..." (Fierstein 17). Zaza is none other than Albin's name as a female impersonator. Albin's profession only furthers Jean-Michel's resolve to keep their situation a secret from his future in-laws.

After the shock of betrayal from the two people he loves most, Albin returns and puts his professional experience as a female impersonator to work. He pretends to be Jean-Michel's biological mother, but, ultimately, his cover is blown and the Dindons discover the truth of their future in-laws' sexuality. Dindon is outraged and plans to leave the club only to discover the negative publicity he would endure if seen leaving such an establishment. In the end, Albin and Georges help the Dindons escape by dressing them all, including Dindon, in full drag. Following their successful escape, Jean-Michel and Anne are permitted to marry and Albin is able to forgive Georges and Jean-Michel.

Character Situation

In La Cage aux Folles, “I Am What I Am” is sung by Albin. The play opens with Albin refusing to go onstage in protest of his belief that Georges has been unfaithful. These accusations are false, but not without merit, as the couple’s son, Jean-Michel, was the product of a one-night-stand Georges had some 20 years earlier. The events of this scene establish Albin as a fickle drama queen in need of any kind of attention he can muster.

Through the course of the first act we learn that Jean-Michel has become engaged to the daughter of a conservative politician and plans to introduce his fiancée's parents to his. The date is already set, and Jean-Michel tells Georges that Albin must not be in attendance. He would prefer his biological mother attend the evening. This request leaves Georges very uneasy, but his desire to help his son find happiness with his mate overpowers his concern for Albin’s feelings. Through an array of missed opportunities, Georges neglects to tell Albin of the situation until Albin spots some of his belongings being removed from the couple’s apartment. He raises the question to Georges who must confess that Albin will not be welcome in his own home while the Dindons, Anne’s parents, are visiting. Albin is hurt by this act of betrayal by the two people he loves most in the world. He vows to complete his show for the evening, but once back onstage, he is overcome with emotion. He stops the show and sings “I Am What I Am” to Georges and Jean-Michel as an anthem of tolerance, but with, in the original production, a great deal of anger at their actions.

Character Function

Albin is quite a challenge for an actor. He is a male, but within the show he functions as the leading lady. Not only is he a female impersonator by night, he is also the feminine element of a long-term homosexual relationship. Albin dresses in effeminate clothing throughout the play, both on and offstage at La Cage aux Folles. His gestures and body language help the audience define his character. The song, “A Little More Mascara,” is Albin’s first solo in the show and gives us a glimpse into the psychology of why someone of one sex might find comfort in portraying a character from the opposite: external beauty and popular acceptance are paramount. Within the song, he cites feeling “glamorous, elegant, and beautiful” (Fierstein 31) as his only way of seeing the world as “beautiful too” (31). This statement gives the audience a glimpse into Albin’s mind. We learn how dependent he has become on his alter ego, Zaza, for his personal happiness. This information becomes pertinent later in the show when Albin comes to the rescue of his family under the guise of Jean-Michel’s birth mother during the Dindon’s visit. Without this deep dependence on his female impersonations, he would not have been able to fool his house guests.

Examining Albin’s home life with Georges, we see a person very insecure in most aspects of his life. This is the case, at least until “I Am What I Am”. The scenes in Act I show Albin as somewhat whiny and difficult for no apparent reason. One is left to interpret his actions as ploys for attention, whether intentional or not. Following the song, in Act II, Albin is able to take control of the entire dinner party while portraying Jean-Michel’s biological mother and bring the two families together despite their apparent opposing moral standards.

Song Function Within the Play

During the play, “I Am What I Am” functions as both a song sung directly to another character as well as a statement to the world at large. The script calls for Georges still to be visible during this song, but it in no way indicates that Albin must direct his performance to him. Georges then becomes witness to Albin’s statement of individualism and frustration to the entire audience.

The song itself, within the play, seems to have an angry edge about it. One can see why the character would be inclined to express such feelings at this point in time after being betrayed by the two people he loves most. But with further examination, one can begin to see the multi-faceted gem of emotion Albin is experiencing: heartbreak, pride, refusal to be overlooked, etc. He sings of his virtues as a human being. He will not be hidden away from view because people are unwilling to accept him. He states he may not always come out on top, but he takes responsibility for his personal decisions and does not ask for special treatment despite his success. He goes on to say that “life’s not worth a damn” (Fierstein 66) until one can accept oneself and then project that truth to the world.

Song Function Within the Revue

Since I was performing this song with no chance to establish back story or situation with the audience, the idea of trying to perform it in context was not very plausible. Throughout the rehearsal process, I tried to convey some of Albin’s frustration with his situation but ran into vocal issues with sustaining the anger and the physical manifestations of my feelings, compromising my vocal technique. Being such a well-known song, the pressure of audience

expectation was also on my mind. People who know the show may expect a performance with the same subtext.

After discussing the situation with the director, I decided it would be best for me to perform the song simply as an anthem, not an anthem within the story. This decision made the performance much easier in many ways. I was able to sing using the technique and quality with which I am most comfortable without worrying about vocal fatigue. The development of this fatigue had roots in attempts to use the Meisner technique to draw various emotions into the character including anger and betrayal. Upon developing problems with this approach, I again employed the techniques of the Estill Voice System to aide in remedying the problem. The issue began with my larynx becoming constricted and too high during the course of the song, so to relax and reposition my muscles, I used the technique of engaging other muscles in my body to redirect the strain that had previously been felt by my vocal mechanism. In engaging my back, shoulder, and leg muscles, I was able to feel the necessary emotions while not compromising good vocal sound in the process.

We also discussed the idea of the text of the song traveling up my spine and out my mouth. This metaphor really helped complete the transition from full show to revue. With this new perspective I was able to really feel the joy of saying “I Am What I Am”, not the defiant, aggressive undercurrents I had felt previously.

Analysis of Script and Score

The first element of text one notices about “I Am What I Am” is the number of times the title phrase is stated within the song. This leaves at least five different options for interpretation. Which word should be emphasized at which moment within the piece? I decided the first verse

and chorus (measures 24-40) would be Albin speaking for himself and others like him. I got a note about singing the song “for” myself which I misinterpreted as “to” myself. This came across as being apologetic and weak, and, after clarification, I realized “for” can mean a multitude of things. I decided the beginning does not have to be anemic. While it is a cappella, it does not have to sound weak. As discussed with the director, Earl Weaver, the “go to hell” attitude can inform the text and offers a great energy to begin the song. The idea of singing “for” myself also energized the line because it is closely connected to the text.

The title phrase, with its many interpretive possibilities, lends itself to this multitude of interpretations in regards to diction as well. One can use a glottal attack on four of the five words. While using such an onset for all four would not be the preferred choice, the options for interpretive license cannot be ignored. In the opening phrase, I chose to emphasize the first and third words, “I”, because of the overarching idea of ownership in the first verse. Albin talks about being “[his] own special creation” and in “[his] world” (Fierstein 65). This is not to indicate that he feels entitled or some strong desire for world domination, only to be seen as the legitimate contributor to society that he is.

The second verse and chorus are raised a whole step from A major in verse one to B major in verse two. This adds a level of intensity and urgency to the song. The composer uses a direct modulation in all key changes, the next being from B to C major for the next verse and chorus. This device assists in creating the feeling of additional thought on the part of the character. As an actor, through discussion with the director, I decided to approach each verse as a new layer, or moment of “I am not done speaking yet”. This choice really helped me justify the key changes as well as the continuation of the song, as each verse has a very nice conclusion in and of itself. In this section, I opted to emphasize “what” in the title phrase. This is due to the

following lines referring to external metaphors in the text. The phrase “some think it’s noise, I think it’s pretty” (Fierstein 66) offers an opportunity to employ different vocal colors to emphasize text painting. “Noise” can be a much uglier sound than “I think it’s pretty”. In discussion with my voice teacher, we decided the inclusion of “I think it’s” into the “pretty” vocal color was more effective than just a contrast between variations in color on “noise” and “pretty”.

The final verse and chorus see the previously mentioned key change from B to C major by direct modulation. In addition, the title phrase is presented through augmentation. The note values are increased which elongates the value of each pitch over a longer length of time. This is actually present through the entire verse and chorus. The note values that had been a combination of quarter and eighth notes are now half and quarter notes. This doubling in rhythmic value adds even more emphasis to the entire final section, making it all the more emphatic. This time, I opted to emphasize “am” since it falls, for the most part, on the down beats of each measure of which it is a part. The rhythmic integrity of the line is not compromised, so the first “I” is transformed from a dotted quarter to a dotted half note. This causes “am” to fall on beat four of the first measure of the phrase, but it is held through one, which, in effect, adds even more emphasis, because in its original incarnation, it was syncopated.

Measure 76 sees the introduction of G-sharp in the accompaniment, which begins the transition to the final key of D-flat. The G-sharp becomes the leading tone to A major, which is tonicized through measure 80. At measure 81, A-flat is introduced, which begins the transition to the final key of D-flat. A-flat is the fifth scale degree in the new key so the introduction of this altered tone begins the aural transition to D-flat. The modulation is completed on the downbeat of measure 83 with the continued augmentation of the original theme, but now with

repeated eighth note block chords in the upper accompaniment. These repeated chords add another element of emphasis on top of the already established devices in previous verses.

The final phrase in measures 89 through 95 sees one final augmentation of the rhythm from half and quarter notes to whole and half notes. These values prolong the title statement even further than previously heard, which makes the final statement “I am what I am” all the more emphatic.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Jerry Herman has made an indelible mark on American musical theatre. His early life experience with strong women impacted him so much that he integrated their characteristics into the characters he created for the Broadway stage. Whether this was intentional or not, one cannot ignore the similarities found between Herman's real life relationships and his work. His relationship with his mother is paramount among these and the catalyst of his success. Her impact on him is evident in his personal enthusiasm for his work as well as in his personal life. This enthusiasm then found its way into all of his other relationships, whether personal or professional, and, in many cases, both. Herman's obsession with strong women has never been a secret; not only in the characters he creates, but also in the relationships he places among his most valued. Upon deeper examination, however, one discovers a void in Herman's life following the passing of his mother. This void has been repeatedly filled by numerous women with whom Herman surrounds himself.

Additionally, through my time at UCF, I have developed a deeper appreciation for the musical theatre genre. The directing class during my final semester gave me a new perspective on how I approach the rehearsal process. I discovered an affinity for larger-scale thinking reflecting the thought processes of a director or producer. Not only did this discovery influence my career goals, but it also changed my way of approaching my thesis. At that point, I had not found an angle to approach the material. It was with this new found approach to the project that I was able to pin point Herman's interest in women and how that interest throughout his life affected his work.

Researching this information equipped me with an exemplary understanding of Herman's personal and professional life. Being familiar with this information aided me in preparing my performance by giving me a sense of ownership of the material. By researching Herman's life, I was able to better understand his personal journey and how his life is manifested in his work. The women with whom he is so closely associated have been by his side from the very beginning and are present in each of his commercially successful productions: Hello, Dolly!, Mame, and La Cage aux Folles. This realization led me to hypothesize that the failure of The Grand Tour may very well be due to the fact that it does not feature such a leading female figure.

By applying this research, I was able to give my performance a greater sense of purpose. Being so well-acquainted with the motivation behind each song and the circumstances surrounding its composition made me more aware of Herman's creative process and made me better appreciate his work. This appreciation was evident in my personal experience during each performance of It's Today: An Evening of Jerry Herman. I felt very much like Jerry and Phyllis must have felt when beginning their careers in the cabaret clubs of New York City in the 1950's. Back then, Herman was among those putting on the show, but, in our production, we were not fortunate enough to have Jerry Herman with us. Nonetheless, one may have felt Herman's optimism in the music we performed and shared with our audiences as a direct result of Herman's personality being such a big part of his output.

While preparing the music and blocking for the show may have been sufficient for our production I feel that a deeper understanding of Herman's life-long association with women enhanced the performance. This gave a better understanding and credibility to Herman's personal feelings toward his work: the joy of "I Am What I Am" through the feelings of defeat associated with "Marianne" and The Grand Tour. Being acquainted with Herman's personal and

professional background helped me make stronger choices and added a sense of responsibility to the material. This research also helped me understand the function of the male roles in relation to Herman's strong, leading female characters by studying the women in his life.

My coursework at the University of Central Florida aided in my performance primarily by acquainting me further with the genre of musical theatre. I have learned what an integral part character plays in creating roles in musicals. This realization, married with research on Jerry Herman, has totally reinvented my approach to musical theatre repertoire. Examining the work of Jerry Herman, I was able to gain a deeper appreciation for the art form. He has revealed how he writes songs for character and not just music. This synthesis of both in one person, for me, truly personifies the Broadway musical in Jerry Herman.

Herman continues to consult on productions of his work as well as compose new material. In all he does, Ruth remains Herman's primary inspiration and close friends like Sheila Mack, Phyllis Newman, Carol Channing, and Angela Lansbury only add to his treasure trove of material from which to draw for future projects. Only Herman knows when the world will enjoy the pleasure of meeting the next Jerry's Girl.

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