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DOLLY'LL NEVER GO AWAY AGAIN: PRODUCING THE
CLASSIC MUSICAL AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

by

JASON WHITEHEAD
B.F.A. University of Central Florida, 2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre
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in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

High school theatre programs tend to select musicals that employ many students, both on and offstage, as well as titles which contain little to no objectionable content, making it safe for all family members to attend. The community standards imposed by school districts limit the choices for theatre teachers. Students also tend to be attracted to the newer and recently released musicals, ones that just finished a national tour or their Broadway run. Finding a title that adheres to the various criteria of a high school can be demanding and frustrating.

For my thesis, I mounted and produced *Hello, Dolly!* at Dr. Phillips High School in February of 2020. This is a musical that hasn't been produced at all in the school's 33-year history, nor has it been produced locally in the greater Central Florida area for some time. Due to the popularity from the recent 2017 revival and subsequent tour, there is a renewed interest in the piece among the theatre savvy students.

The annual Spring musical at Dr. Phillips High School is a massive undertaking that utilizes most of the department on and backstage, as well as having a live student orchestra featuring students from the music department.

Hello, Dolly! does not require a reinvention or reinterpretation; there is a reason it has stayed a favorite for the past 55 years without a rewriting or revision. For this reason, I stuck as closely as possible to the original production design and staging within the budget and capabilities of a high school Theatre Department. It is important to have the students experience the demands and beauty of a classic musical.

I served as director and musical director for this production, and I also staged some of the lesser choreographic songs. This allowed me to approach the production from various angles, all through the same conceptual lens.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The annual high school musical at Dr. Phillips High School is an undertaking that generates a lot of excitement. The students spend the year anticipating what the title will be and the local community supportively attends the production each year. Dr. Phillips High School houses the theatre performing arts magnet for the county, and this creates high expectations for the student performers, technicians, musicians, and for the overall experience had by the audience when attending one of these performances. It is not an easy feat to decide which title to produce; the choice requires considering titles that have been produced locally in the recent past, what technical and instrumental demands the piece contains, as well as the skill level required for the students as actors, vocalists, and dancers. For these reasons, I selected the 1964 Tony Award winning musical *Hello, Dolly!* for the 2020 spring musical.

Having enjoyed a successful 2017 revival and subsequent tour, there is now a renewed interest in the music and story of *Hello, Dolly!* among the students and theatre-minded patrons. It is not a title with which the students are too familiar, as their previous knowledge of the songs and film is the limit to their exposure of the piece. Other than a November 2018 stop of the national tour, Orlando hasn't produced this title professionally, and there have only been a handful of high school productions mounted.

Dr. Phillips High School

Dr. Phillips High School was founded in 1987 in the suburban area of Dr. Phillips, Florida. Named after Dr. Philip Phillips, the community spans the area of what used to be his orange grove property ("Our History: Dr. Phillips Charities"). The high school is famous for

being located directly across the street from Universal Studios, Orlando. Serving approximately 3800 students in the 2019-2020 school year, the school offers two magnet programs and several academies, in addition to athletic extracurricular activities.

The Visual and Performing Arts magnet was established in 1994, and offers a focused study in visual art, dance, instrumental music, vocal music, television production, and theatre arts. Students from anywhere in Orange County can audition, and if accepted, are allowed to attend Dr. Phillips High School for one of these programs. Students in the magnet program take restricted electives in their art field in addition to their regular academic load. The theatre strand of the magnet offers a college-level course load of classes including acting, musical theatre, technical theatre and design, directing, and playwriting. Each year, the department produces four to six productions between the main stage proscenium theatre and the black box. An annual Spring musical also features students from the music department and is one of the hallmarks of the season.

Due to the rigor of the theatre curriculum, the program has received multiple local, state, national, and international recognitions. The department has been invited five times to perform in the American High School Theatre Festival as part of the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival, held in August in Edinburgh, Scotland. A regular attendee of the annual Florida State Thespian Festival, the school has received multiple superior rankings and invitations for main stage and one-act performances at the competition. The department has had the honor of representing the state at the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) multiple times. Locally, the department has participated in the Orlando International Fringe Festival several times and has

received many awards at the Applause Awards, a precursor to the National High School Musical Theatre Awards.

Because of the notoriety the department has received from its international presence and its numerous awards, high expectations are held each year by the parents, students, school administration, other local high school theatre departments, and audiences for the productions, particularly the spring musical.

Hello, Dolly!

Hello, Dolly! premiered on Broadway on January 16, 1964 at the St. James Theatre. Running for a total of 2,844 performances, the musical was awarded a record ten Tony awards including Best Musical, Book, Score, Direction, and Actress for its star Carol Channing. This record was not surpassed until 2001 when *The Producers* won twelve awards (Herman and Bloom 46). Based on Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*, this musical combined the talents of producer David Merrick, director and choreographer Gower Champion, composer and lyricist Jerry Herman, and leading lady Carol Channing. For a while, the show held the record for the longest-running Broadway musical of all time, partly because of David Merrick's decision to rotate stars in the title role including Martha Raye, Mary Martin, Ginger Rogers, Betty Grable, Phyllis Diller, Ethel Merman, and Pearl Bailey. In a historical move, producer David Merrick had Bailey lead an all-black cast in 1967 (Green and Ginell 204). There were plenty of all-black musicals that played on Broadway, but this was the first time a musical which had opened with a white cast be completely recast with an all-black cast in the musical's original run.

The success of the Broadway run of *Hello, Dolly!* led to international productions, a successful 1969 film starring Barbra Streisand, and many recordings of the title song, the most popular being Louis Armstrong's. Its popularity reached a new height when the song was used as part of Lyndon Johnson's 1964 election campaign (Green and Ginell 204).

The combination of Jerry Herman's score, Michael Stewart's (and Thornton Wilder's) text, Gower Champion's staging, and the charisma of the various leading ladies have created a harmonious and joyful piece of theatre that has endured a 55-year legacy. Author Gary Konas states that "*Hello, Dolly!* would seem not only to follow the musical comedy paradigm, but nearly define it: upbeat show tunes, a charismatic character, seemingly minor problems, comic misadventures, and romantic resolution" (Konas 458). These elements create a story that provides an escape for the audience. In a period of time where the majority of contemporary art has a message, point of view, and overt statements to be made, *Hello, Dolly!* provides a simple, heartfelt, and innocent story in which to lose oneself. This opportunity gives both the onstage and offstage participants a breath of fresh air, adding to the overall positive experience of the show. "Anybody can make a comedy which is cruel. It is very hard to make a comedy which is kind. To give a fellow feeling between the young and old, that is art. And that is *The Matchmaker*" (Wilder xv).

Gower Champion's original effective and sharp staging and choreography have also contributed to the staying power of the piece. There is a subtlety and simplicity in his staging of the numbers "Put On Your Sunday Clothes" and "Hello, Dolly," but a challenge and thrill in numbers such as "The Waiters' Gallop" and "Dancing," which allows for technique to shine through.

These elements provide a perfect piece for students and audience patrons to experience together. In a season featuring a jukebox musical (*Mamma Mia*), contemporary drama (*33 Variations*), all-female Shakespeare (*Much Ado About Nothing*), and contemporary comedy (*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*), *Hello, Dolly!* provides the perfect complement and balance of style, theme, and genre, affording the students another learning opportunity to craft their skills.

CHAPTER TWO: *HELLO, DOLLY!* MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

Thornton Wilder

Born in 1897 in Madison, Wisconsin, Thornton Wilder achieved success for writing novels and the plays *Our Town*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and *The Matchmaker*. He earned his BA from Yale and went on to study archaeology and Italian at the American Academy in Rome, as well as earning a master's degree in French from Princeton ("Biography"). He served as a lecturer on world literature classics at the University of Chicago for six years (Ziolkowski 550). In addition to writing his novels and plays, Wilder also served as a translator, translating foreign plays into English and writing essays in German, Spanish, and French. He wrote multiple essays, short plays, novels, opera librettos, and a screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock ("Biography").

After high school graduation, Wilder spent a year at the American Academy in Rome studying the Classics. His experience in Rome led him to publish the 1926 novel *The Cabala, Memoirs of A Roman Student*. His knowledge and study of Roman comedy and style would later influence the structure and devices used in *The Matchmaker*, which became the basis for *Hello, Dolly!* (Ziolkowski 550).

Wilder died from a heart attack in 1975, and his legacy is measured by his numerous awards: he is the only writer to have received the Pulitzer Prize for both drama and fiction (Wilder back cover), the Gold Medal for Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Book Committee's Medal for Literature, and the German Goethe-Plakette Award ("Biography").

Jerry Herman

Born on July 10, 1931, Gerald Sheldon Herman was born to parents Harry and Ruth Herman in Jersey City (Cintron 11). During his childhood, his house was always filled with music of Rodgers and Hart, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Jerome Kern, and a young Jerry learned to quickly play these songs by ear on the piano with his mother's help. This skill would later serve him well as he was able to return home from live musical performances and immediately play back the songs from the show on the piano by ear (16). Jerry never learned how to read music, and that would separate him from any formal music training offered at his grammar school growing up (19).

Herman had a strained relationship with his father, who wanted him to become an athlete. From their summers running the Stissing Lake Camp in Pine Plains, New York, father Harry would push Jerry into playing baseball, and not the piano in the social hall (Cintron 18). Conversely, his mother accepted who Jerry was and wanted to be. Herman would spend later summers at the camp putting on full-fledged productions of *Oklahoma!* and *Finian's Rainbow*. Once his father witnessed the amount of campers returning for the theatrical offering, his resistance to Jerry's passion lessened (23).

Influenced by the likes of Irving Berlin, Jerry Herman emulated his simplicity in writing style. Herman admired how few notes and words it took for Berlin to get his message across and would adopt this style for his compositions. After seeing *Annie Get Your Gun* starring Ethel Merman, Herman knew that hers was the type of voice for which he wanted to write (Cintron 21). This affection would hold true as he wrote *Hello, Dolly!* with Ethel Merman in mind.

After spending a year at Parsons School of Design, Herman transferred to the University of Miami to enroll in their Theatre Department (Cintron 25). During his time at University of Miami, he met and was engaged to Sally Singer, who appeared in the many musical revues Herman wrote (31). This engagement ended as school came to a close, and Jerry finally acknowledged his homosexuality. He told her he would be unable to support a wife on his journey to becoming a Broadway composer (33).

His Broadway plans would become interrupted as he was drafted into the army. After his brief stint in the service, he came back to work on an Off-Broadway production of one of his revues, this time financed and supported by his father and some of the camp families. This revue, *I Feel Wonderful*, garnered enough attention from the *New York World Telegram* critic that an agent shortly signed Herman (Cintron 33).

From spending time as a cocktail pianist, Herman finally had another one of his revues, *Parade*, run in Greenwich Village for 95 performances, establishing Herman as a promising composer (Cintron 46). Herman went on to achieve success with the scores and lyrics to *Milk and Honey* (1961), *Hello, Dolly!* (1964), *Mame* (1966), *Dear World* (1969), *Mack and Mabel* (1974), *La Cage Aux Folles* (1983). Herman was awarded the Tony Award for Best Score for *Hello, Dolly!* and *La Cage Aux Folles*.

Gower Champion

A ballroom dance-trained director and choreographer, Alfred Gower Carlisle Champion was born on June 22, 1919 in Chicago, Illinois (Gilvey 3). Due to his parents' divorce when he

was only four months old, his mother took on the sole role of parent and became very protective and involved in Gower and his brother's lives (5).

Gower's introduction to dance came from his short time spent at Los Angeles' Lawlor's School for Professional Children, a "private grammar school for child performers, which Judy Garland also attended" (Gilvey 6). Champion later enrolled in various dancing schools throughout childhood, including the Norma Gould School of Dancing, where he met his future dance partner Jeanne Tyler. His talent caught the eye of Ernest Belcher, a silent film choreographer who ran one of the most renowned dance schools in Los Angeles. Ernest also happened to be father to a classmate and Champion's future wife Marjorie Belcher (7).

Gower and Jeanne soon hit the nightclub circuit after winning a dance contest and traveled the country performing in a vaudeville style show with "leading dance bands of the day" (Gilvey 10). This circuit introduced Gower to Broadway choreographer Robert Alton and opened the door for Champion to begin performing and working for the New York stage (13).

Champion enlisted in the navy during the Second World War and still managed to produce shows. After serving his time and producing shows, he later headed to New York where he had the chance to choreograph a few unsuccessful Broadway shows (Gilvey 35). His work was noticed, and he soon had a contract with Metro Golden Mayer to appear in films such as *Show Boat* and *Jupiter's Darling* (42). After further television and live appearances, the Champions' fame became in high demand, which led to his initial stint as a television director (68). His style was directly influenced by Rouben Mamoulian, who demanded a "unity of style" (68), and Gower brought the same consistency to his directing work.

Mamoulian was a famed Broadway and film director, noted for staging the original productions of *Porgy and Bess* (1935), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), as well as the films *Applause* (1929), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Becky Sharp*, the first film to be filmed in Technicolor (Flint). A hallmark of his style was his fluidity, which is evident by his use of a mobile camera as well as a 360-degree rotating camera. He was the first filmmaker to do so. His filmmaking style translated into a constant movement in his stage direction, something Gower Champion would honor and adapt in his productions, specifically *Hello, Dolly!* There are no blackouts in *Hello, Dolly!*, as every scene flows into another with use of the passerelle or by choreographing scene changes to move one location into another.

Gower Champion directed and choreographed the successful *Bye Bye Birdie* in 1959 (Gilvey 80), followed by *Carnival* in 1961 (91). Following his successful stage production of *Hello, Dolly!*, Champion would later direct *I Do! I Do!* (1966), *The Happy Time* (1968), *Sugar* (1972), *Irene* (1973), *Mack and Mabel* (1974), before ending his career with the successful *42nd Street* (1980) (Gilvey). Sadly, Gower passed from a type of blood cancer prior to the opening night on Broadway of *42nd Street*.

CHAPTER THREE: *HELLO, DOLLY!* HISTORY

The Merchant of Yonkers and The Matchmaker

The plot of *Hello, Dolly!* is based directly on Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*, which began life as *The Merchant of Yonkers* in 1938. After a poor initial run, it was revised in 1954 to shift focus from the titular merchant (Horace Vandergelder) and placed the focus onto a minor character, Mrs. Dolly Levi, to become the newly-crowned titular character of *The Matchmaker*.

The Merchant of Yonkers drew its inspiration from the 1835 British farce by John Oxenford titled *A Day Well Spent* (Konas 456). This play concerns a miser protagonist named Mr. Cotton who entrusts the supervision of his store to his two employees, Bolt and Mizzle (Oxenford). The young men "escape their humdrum for existence," (Konas 457) and take a day in the city ("a day well spent") instead of following their employer's orders. This play laid the foundation for the characters of Cornelius and Barnaby to defy Horace's instruction, and spend their unsupervised time getting "an adventure out of this yet" (Stewart 22). Similarities of the plots include the young men hiding out in a dressmaker's shop and subsequently having to take the female employees out to a restaurant which Bolt and Mizzle cannot afford (Oxenford).

This play was later adapted in 1842 by Johann Nestroy into *Einen Jux Will Er Sich Machen* (He Wants to Have A Lark). While still focusing on the two employees and their adventures, this adaptation added more focus on the curmudgeon overlord (Gilvey 114).

Having previously studied Classical literature during his stay in Rome, Wilder was directly influenced by Roman comedy. Terence's *Phormio* concerns two sons who are in the care of Phormio while their respective fathers leave town for a trip. During Phormio's supervision, the two sons fall in love with women and it is Phormio's responsibility to help these men win the

women's hearts (Ziolkowski 552). One of the characteristics of the parasite stock character is that he leeches on the food of others ("Stock Characters"). This predominant trait is echoed in Dolly Levi's eating scene in the courtroom. Another important trait of the parasite is the "amusing and ironic manner of speech, as he supported his patron with ambiguous witticisms" (Ziolkowski 558). Dolly Levi also displays this identifiable trait throughout *Hello, Dolly!*

Also influenced by Molière, Wilder acknowledges he inserted an adapted short scene of Molière's *The Miser* into *The Matchmaker*, where marriage broker Frosine tries to set up Harpagon with a frivolous character, knowing it would end in disaster (Wilder 167). This is reflected in *Hello, Dolly!* and *The Matchmaker* as Ernestina Money (Ernestina Simple). In a letter to his friend and actress Ruth Gordon, who originally played the role of Dolly in *The Matchmaker*, Wilder writes, "I've been reading all the great 'formal' comedies in every language: Molière..." (Wilder 171). Heavily influenced by *A Day Well Spent* and *Einen Jux Will Er Sich Machen*, Wilder adapted these stories into *The Merchant of Yonkers* with one notable addition: he created the character of Dolly Gallagher Levi (Gilvey 115).

The Merchant of Yonkers premiered in December of 1938 to poor reviews. *New York Journal-American* critic John Anderson wrote, "When a farce isn't funny, there is nothing to be done" (Wilder 174), and Robert Benchley of *The New Yorker* wrote, "What in the name of God made a writer as exalted as Thornton Wilder think that it was important for him to wrench himself into the past to the extent of reviving a farce from the Vienna of 1842" (Wilder 174). Wilder attributed the economy and the depression to part of the play's failure, while others attributed Austrian born director Max Reinhardt's inability to understand "Wilder's play nor the American crowd" (175).

After the play's publication, the interest from student and community groups in producing the play led to more interest in the play and the inevitable revival. Actress Ruth Gordon, for whom Wilder originally intended the role, was the instigator for a revival of *The Merchant of Yonkers*, this time having it premiere in the United Kingdom, further distancing any resemblance of the original and relying on her past London stage presence to boost interest in the piece (Wilder 176).

Thornton Wilder produced *The Matchmaker* first in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1954. After transferring to London, the production finally made its way to America in October of the same year (Wilder xviii). The footnote of the character page in the script mentions that *The Matchmaker* is a rewritten version of *The Merchant of Yonkers*. It also gives credit to “*Einen Jux Will Er Sich Machen* (Vienna, 1842), which was in turn based upon an English original, *A Day Well Spent* (London, 1835) by John Oxenford” (xix).

The Matchmaker follows *The Merchant of Yonkers* rather closely, with the most noticeable change in the focus of the title character from Horace Vandergelder to Dolly Levi. The character is only referred to as “Mrs. Levi” in *The Merchant of Yonkers*. In addition to shifting the main focus to Dolly, Wilder writes that he changed the name to “...give a title role for Ruthie. And a great help in Act II where the audience will see more clearly why she's telling lies for and about Cornelius” (Wilder 177). As directed by Tyrone Guthrie, *The Matchmaker* had more of a “slapstick” feel and comedic understanding, versus the classical directing and acting style in *The Merchant of Yonkers* (180).

Thornton Wilder acknowledges that the two scripts are merely identical, but *The Matchmaker* is a “cut, trimmed, original touched up version of YONKERS” (Wilder 180). A

shift in American sensibility and appreciation is noted between the two decades in which the two scripts were written: *The Merchant of Yonkers* was written during the Depression and Wilder used Dolly's Act IV lecture to comment on the spirit of the human race, whereas the 1954 post war *The Matchmaker* comments on the function of money through the infamous metaphor "Money, pardon the expression, is like manure; it's not worth a thing unless it's spread about encouraging young things to grow" (159).

Hello, Dolly!

Having achieved success on the 1961 musical *Carnival*, his previous partnership with director/choreographer Gower Champion and librettist Michael Stewart, David Merrick was in search of his next project and landed upon *The Matchmaker* due to its "heightened reality, perfectly suited to song and dance, and a plot set in late-nineteenth-century New York, a time and place with musical connotations" (Gilvey 114). Hoping to reunite his *Carnival* team, Merrick approached Bob Merrill, the composer of *Carnival*, to write the score, but Merrill rejected the offer on the basis of not wanting to work with Gower Champion again (115). Jerry Herman was recommended by Michael Stewart and wrote four songs as an "audition" for the job: "Hello, Dolly!," "Put On Your Sunday Clothes," "I Put My Hand In," and a song that was later cut from the score, "I Still Love the Love That I Loved" (116). Merrick was impressed with Jerry's creation of an Americana ambience in the music and immediately gave him the job.

Both Michael Stewart and Jerry Herman were writing the show with Ethel Merman in mind, but once the role of Dolly Levi was offered to her, she declined stating that she "no longer had the stamina for lengthy commitments" (Gilvey 117). After courting other actresses, Merrick

finally approached Carol Channing after seeing her perform in a touring production of *Show Girl* (117). After a film project failed to materialize in Hollywood, Gower Champion was now available to stage and direct the piece, which was originally titled *Dolly! A Damned Exasperating Woman* (118). Both Merrick and Champion visited Channing in her performance of George Bernard Shaw's *The Millionairess* on Long Island, and initially decided she would be wrong for the part. Carol met with her old friend Champion to petition for the part, and ultimately won him over with her unique outlook on the role (119).

Hello, Dolly! opened at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit on November 18, 1963 to mixed-to-negative reviews (Gilvey 137). The critics recognized the show's potential, but also commented on the less than stellar moments. From replacing the act one finale with the now iconic "Before the Parade Passes By," discussion included the possible elimination of the famous "Put on Your Sunday Clothes." Changes between the Detroit run and the next stop in Washington, DC included reworking the opening number to "Call on Dolly," and creating a dinner scene in Harmonia Gardens for Vandergelder and Dolly instead of keeping a duet originally titled "No, A Million Times, No" (141). Bob Merrill, on call from David Merrick, supplied a new Act Two opening, "Elegance," and collaborated with Jerry Herman to create the Act One hat shop comic number, "Motherhood March" (Mchugh 605). Between the Washington and New York productions, famous jazz musician Louis Armstrong recorded a version of "Hello, Dolly!" which generated interest and popularity of the show prior to the Broadway debut (Gilvey 149). On January 16, 1964, *Hello, Dolly!* opened to rave reviews at the St. James Theatre. The show would go on to win ten Tony awards for: Best Actress in a Musical (Carol Channing), Best Composer and Lyricist (Jerry Herman), Best Author (Michael Stewart), Best Conductor

(Shepard Coleman), Best Scenic Designer (Oliver Smith), Best Costume Designer (Freddy Wittop), Best Producer of a Musical (David Merrick), Best Director of a Musical (Gower Champion), and Best Choreography (Gower Champion) (153). The show would run for six years and feature an array of leading ladies: Ginger Rogers, Martha Raye, Betty Grable, Bibi Osterwald, Pearl Bailey, Phyllis Diller, and finally, Ethel Merman until it closed on December 27, 1970 (153).

CHAPTER FOUR: *HELLO, DOLLY!* ANALYSIS

At the heart of *Hello, Dolly!* is a group of people who are longing for the opportunity to feel complete. They are willing to be set up on dates, risk losing their jobs by taking the day off work, and willing to be arrested. This feeling of completion is achieved through partnership and what some of the characters interpret as love. Dolly is the character who recognizes that romance doesn't need to be present for her to be complete, but she only shares this view only with the audience. The other characters have the opportunity to explore the romantic side of this notion of completion.

Through the course of 24 hours, *Hello, Dolly!* takes multiple characters on a wild adventure in New York City during the late 1890s. The curtain rises on townspeople in New York City instructing the audience to “Call on Dolly / She’s the one the spinsters recommend,” (Stewart and Herman 5), as Dolly Gallagher Levi makes her first appearance via horsecar. In the first of many instances throughout the play, Dolly starts the show with breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the audience. While she introduces her various “jobs,” she is telling the audience of her desire and plan to marry Horace Vandergelder, “the well-known half-a-millionaire” (5) of Yonkers, NY. She has decided to remarry in order to carry out the wishes of her late husband Ephraim to ensure an individual’s money is distributed and handled responsibly. Comedically, the audience is introduced to the various roles and “occupations” Dolly can and will perform throughout the show. This also establishes Dolly as a comedienne in a larger-than-life presence, making the townspeople and audience alike fall in love with her.

Dolly then sings “I Put My Hand In,” which establishes her defining trait: “I meddle” (Stewart and Herman 7). From describing the various matches she’s paired, Dolly continues to

showcase her matchmaking abilities as she partners various couples. While technically a solo vocal song, the ensemble joins in the staging of the piece to create a fast-paced visual world, echoing Dolly's wild personality and world. This also establishes the style of the show to come, displaying the exaggerated and silly physical style and witty dialogue in the hat shop scene, Ernestina Money, the Waiters' Gallop, and the Harmonia Gardens dinner scene.

The theatrical convention of a soliloquy is used throughout *Hello, Dolly!* by multiple characters. Once the opening song ends, Dolly has her first soliloquy in the show. Dolly delivers what is almost a prayer to her late husband Ephraim Levi, to describe her desire to remarry and use Horace's wealth as Ephraim instructed her to do, and ask for a sign of his approval. This moment (and in later instances throughout the show) become a contrast to the circus that preceded it, showing a vulnerable side to these characters.

Horace now takes charge of the scene establishing his dominance and his methodical and particular way of running things. After he chastises his workers for their poor work ability, he informs them he is headed to the city for his date with Irene Molloy. Vandergelder then directs a "sermon" to the audience, explaining his outlook on life and business. Horace doesn't like his way of life challenged. He has a system and a method to everything he does, and Dolly Levi is the only one who interferes with this. Her entrance into Vandergelder's shop is filled with quick and witty wordplay, distracting Horace from understanding what she is truly doing for him: leading him down the wrong path with Irene and Ernestina to bring him to her. By revealing a false rumor about Irene poisoning her late husband, she constantly misdirects Horace with her words, a trait she will use again in the Harmonia Gardens dinner scene in act two.

After Dolly fabricates another potential suitor, an “heiress,” Horace agrees to meet Ernestina after his date with Irene Molloy, but he remains stalwart in his plans to march in the 14th Street parade later that afternoon. Dolly escorts him out of the shop before declaring that she wants to redecorate the place in blue wallpaper. She quickly exits upstairs to go tend to her first match of the play, Ermengarde and Ambrose.

Vandergelder’s employees Cornelius and Barnaby appear from the basement, and Cornelius expresses his frustration from being stagnant in his position. He decides to close the shop by forcing some of the tomato cans to explode, which enables them to use Mr. Vandergelder’s absence as a reason to take a day off and go explore the city to “live.” Thus, “Put on Your Sunday Clothes” becomes Cornelius’ “I want” song, and expresses his desire to step out of character and experience what life has to offer. These two characters are embarking on an experience with no finite result; they simply want to see with abandon what life has to offer. In a true characteristic of farce, there are no limits to their desire, and the threat of any type of law or authority is disregarded.

Dolly echoes the instruction of “Put on Your Sunday Clothes” to Ermengarde and Ambrose, as she prepares to take them to the city to dance in a polka contest. The ensemble enters in their fanciest “Sunday clothes” as the setting shifts from Yonkers to New York City.

Minnie Fay delivers her monologue/soliloquy to the audience, which gives some exposition about Irene Molloy and how she came to be set up with Horace. Once inside her hat shop, Irene explains her outlook on wanting to be married to the unappealing Horace: she is tired of being suspected as wicked and ready to escape the millinery business. Jerry Herman took a single line from *The Matchmaker* and turned it into Irene’s solo, “Ribbons Down My Back,”

which is what all the fashionable women will be wearing this summer, according to Minnie. The song serves as Irene's expression of a new way of life for her, echoing the same adventure for which Cornelius longs. Stephen Cintron recognizes that by "[ending] this melody on the fifth of the major key rather than the expected tonic...reinforces the feeling of incompleteness, leaving an open door into Irene's love life" (Cintron 84).

Irene spots Cornelius and Barnaby heading into the shop and uses this as an opportunity to have some fun and flirt with the men. She declares that "We'll get an adventure out of this yet" (Stewart and Herman 22) before exiting the stage, right as Cornelius proclaims the exact same phrase as he finds refuge in the shop on his entrance. The out-of-control situation escalates to a true farce of misunderstanding and impersonation as the two unsuspecting boys decide to impersonate rich customers as Irene pretends to be very aggressive and controlling, which makes the boys even more nervous. All of this comes to an explosive intersection when Horace arrives, which forces the boys to hide in the closet and under the table. Irene now has to revert to her true character, and try to conceal the fact that two men are hiding in her ladies' hat shop.

Matters spin even more out of control with Dolly's entrance, as she continues to conceal the boys' presence and create a luxurious résumé for Cornelius. "Motherhood March" is used to display the craziness taking place, as each woman in the shop takes a turn at singing to Horace while Dolly tries to find new hiding spots for Cornelius and Barnaby, only to lead them around in circles, and the song end exactly where it began.

Having successfully displeased Horace with the prospect of Irene, Dolly now begins to pair the two couples and teach the boys how to dance. Irene's disgust in Cornelius and Barnaby prompts Dolly to suggest they take the women to dinner as a suitable punishment, where they

must dance to the music playing at the Harmonia Gardens. As the boys do not know how to dance, Dolly presents another business card with yet another one of her skills: a dance teacher. She begins immediately with lesson seven: the waltz kick turn, before realizing Cornelius' lack of experience and reverts to lesson one. The fast pace of this dance lesson and song continues to support the notion of the farce, as things move along very quickly with little time for rational reasoning behind decisions and action. The excitement and joy created from the matching and dancing transcends the hat shop and spills into the street, where everyone is celebrating their joy through dance. As the song progresses, Cornelius/Irene and Barnaby/Minnie are content with their pairing, discovering the possibilities of love and adventure waiting beyond the walls of their workplaces.

It is after "Dancing" where Dolly finally has her turning point and most vulnerable moment in the show. She reunites with an old friend, Mrs. Rose, and realizes her need to "rejoin human race" (Stewart and Herman 33). Having previously put in to motion the romantic paths of Horace, Cornelius, Barnaby, Irene, Minnie, Ermengarde, and Ambrose, it is now time to focus on her own desires. Dolly speaks her second soliloquy in the musical, and shares the memory of an old oak leaf falling out of her bible to reveal her still present love and admiration for Ephraim. She asks him to "let [her] go," (33) to allow her to be free and receive the joy life has to offer. Irene reenters hand-in-hand with Cornelius to proclaim, "the world is full of wonderful things" (34), and this confirmation of the power and magic of love reignites Dolly's desire to have that experience for herself. She sings the show stopping "Before the Parade Passes By," which uses the 14th Street parade excitement and purpose as a mirror to Dolly putting her vulnerable self forward and leading the way for happiness.

After a brief encounter with Horace and the faux Ernestina, Horace declares to Dolly that she is fired as his matchmaker and is now “just a woman like anyone else” (Stewart and Herman 35). Dolly has Horace exactly where she wants him and proclaims, “Ephraim – he’s as good as mine,” (35) before singing a short reprise of “Before the Parade Passes By” to end the act.

Act two opens with Cornelius, Irene, Barnaby, and Minnie, on their way to the Harmonia Gardens for a dinner the boys cannot afford. As the women think they are about to embark on one of the fanciest evenings of their lives, the reality of not having enough money is severe and frightening to Cornelius and Barnaby. In order to prevent the women from hiring a cab, the men instruct them that the fanciest mode of transportation is to walk, and then proceed to perform a literal song and dance to convince the women of their “elegance.” The stylistic performance is punctuated by the reentrance of the two couples, this time exhausted from having walked all those blocks to the Harmonia Gardens.

Rudolph instructs his waitstaff and cooks that tonight is special and that their “lightning speed service” is to be “twice as lightning as ever, or else” (Stewart and Herman 39). What ensues is another mayhem-driven visual display of the farcical nature of this show. Cornelius, Irene, Barnaby, and Minnie enter and begin their evening, with the women entranced by the splendor and class of the evening, and the men dreading every item ordered, and looking for a way out. Horace enters with the less-than-desirable Ernestina, and his evening is a constant battle of trying to maintain his dignity and class against Ernestina’s bawdy and uncouth behavior. Barnaby and Horace both head towards the band leader to request a song, but on the way, they lose their wallets and, in another characteristic of farce, the wallets become swapped and neither character knows this.

Finally, Dolly Levi arrives in her iconic red dress atop the stairs, and she sings of her joyful return to the type of life she used to live with Ephraim. Her descent down the stairs of the Harmonia Gardens to a burlesque-type accompaniment usually elicits a strong applause from the audience, as this is the song they have come to love and hear. This is also Dolly's first entrance in act two, dressed to the nines. According to Jerry Herman, "What I wanted to capture was the moment when this lady, who has locked herself away from life, finally gets the guts to put on her old finery and walk down that staircase to face the world again" (Cintron 89).

As Dolly finally joins Horace for dinner, she quickly and distractedly confuses him with her wordplay. She commands him to go his way, and she'll go hers, unbeknownst to Horace that she is pointing the same direction he is heading. Once he realizes his wallet is missing, he cannot pay for his extravagant dinner and is arrested after causing a ruckus in the dining room during the polka contest, in which he discovers his niece dancing with Ambrose. Various members of the staff and dancing couples are also brought to jail, along with Cornelius, Irene, Barnaby, and Minnie.

In the courtroom, Dolly presents another one of her jobs: counselor-at-law. She says the only true culprit is Horace, and everyone else should be let free. Cornelius, having gained confidence and strength, finally stands up to Horace and asks to speak his mind. He delivers his discovery and soliloquizes to the audience about love. He repeats a line Irene delivered earlier, "Isn't the world full of wonderful things," (Stewart and Herman 51) and he achieves his goal of kissing a girl by the end of his ballad. If Cornelius had stayed in Yonkers and followed Horace's instruction, he would have never met Irene nor had the chance to kiss her and fall in love. It is his disobedience that opened his eyes to a new world.

The judge, having been won over by the heartfelt expression of love, dismisses everyone except Horace, and Dolly reappears to say her goodbye. She sings a rousing vaudeville number, expressing her dismissal of Horace. This number serves two purposes: it gives Horace the closure he expects, so when Dolly reappears it is a necessity for him; and it covers the scene change from the Harmonia Gardens back to Vandergelder's Hay and Feed store, which just so happen to be the two largest sets in the piece.

Back in his shop, Horace recounts Dolly's phrase, "you go your way and I'll go mine" (Stewart and Herman 55), to discover that all along she was planning for them to go the same direction. He admits his folly and begs Dolly to rejoin him, only to be interrupted by his former employees demanding their back pay. Dolly enters and has him go fetch the men and Ermengarde's money, while she delivers her final soliloquy to the audience.

Thornton Wilder (and Michael Stewart) use this sermon to lecture the audience on the dangers of money. According to Dolly, "it can kill or cure" (Stewart and Herman 56). She shares the warning of misuse of money, and how her husband taught her to use it "...like manure. It's not worth a thing unless it's spread around encouraging young things to grow" (56). Horace reenters and confesses his transgressions, and finally asks Dolly to marry him. Before she accepts, she needs to know if she is someone of worth and status, who would be valuable and worthy enough to be seen with him. Horace tells her she is, but he is then distracted by a wallpaper hanger. When Dolly asks what is happening, Horace shares he's redoing his front room in blue wallpaper, the same color Dolly decided in her first scene with Horace in act one. Horace also shares how he always viewed money as manure, echoing Ephraim's outlook, which serves as the sign Dolly has been waiting for the entire play. She turns front one last time to

thank Ephraim, before Horace sings a short reprise of “Hello, Dolly,” this time ending with Dolly sharing that she’s staying and “...will never go away again.” Similar to another Gower Champion show, *Bye Bye Birdie*, Michael Stewart and Gower Champion opt for an intimate and heartfelt pairing of the lead couple versus the flashier full company production number ending (Gilvey).

CHAPTER FIVE: DIRECTION AND STAGING

A lot of feedback shared about my production from audience members and colleagues concerned the diverse casting. Four of my principal characters were African American, which surprised many people. While the 1967 Broadway production featured an all-black cast led by Pearl Bailey, my purpose in casting these students was not to revolutionize or reinvent this classic musical. These students were simply cast for their talents and gifts, and my faith in their performance of bringing these characters to life. I am grateful audience members and theatre-savvy patrons recognized the non-traditional cast, but again, this was not intentional.

One of the happiest moments for my students occurred when the Barnaby understudy on the current *Hello, Dolly!* national tour posted an Instagram message of support. My student playing Barnaby reached out to him to celebrate and share the experience of being a black student portraying this traditionally white role. The two Barnabys found support in one another and the tour Barnaby posted a message of support for him personally, as well as congratulating the entire company on celebrating diversity and representing the melting pot of America, with all colors represented in this traditional musical.

One of the earliest decisions I made about the production was to honor the original production in choreography. Working in conjunction with choreographer Spencer Morrow, I chose to adapt as much of the original staging as possible for my space. Throughout the many revivals and returns of this show to the New York stage, the staging has remained pretty much the same since its 1964 debut. Much of the charm and success of the original production is owed to Gower Champion's structure and storytelling through blocking and choreography. By highlighting the physicality of the actors, he was able to establish the madcap world and rules of

the farce. Hiring comedic actors who had experience in that style contributed to the success.

Recreating that formula was my first task in putting *Hello, Dolly!* on its feet.

“Call on Dolly”

The opening number begins as townspeople enter the stage and freeze sharply on the first sung downbeat of “Call on Dolly.” The fly system which which my theatre is equipped is automatic and runs at a terribly slow speed. In a perfect world, the curtain would rise quickly and the at-rise image would reveal the townspeople already in motion, creating a visual cacophony of bodies and silhouettes. Due to the slow rise of the grand drape, I made the decision to have the ascent begin on the “Hello, Dolly” section of the overture, so the timing would allow the curtain to be visually out of the playing area before the downbeat of “Call on Dolly.” While it did feel slightly jarring at first to witness the curtain moving at a seemingly arbitrary time, I still achieved the desired effect with a short glimpse of the New York City street view backdrop prior to the ensemble entrance.

The movement in this piece was simple: a few specific head nods and bouncing on heels in various poses several times throughout the song. Upon her entrance, Dolly is concealed behind a newspaper she reads while riding on a horsecar. In the absence of a horse, I assigned two ensemble members to push on our carriage, so that Dolly’s entrance would be a surprise reveal. In past Broadway performances of the show, this reveal generated applause for the star performer, and for some of our performances the actress received that congratulation and appreciation. This was more than likely from friends and family members, but the set up for that appreciation is built into the score and staging.

“I Put My Hand In”

The task with this song was to establish Dolly’s command and skill at matchmaking. Throughout the piece, the choreographer used the same bent arm pull motion as a traveling step, visually unifying the ensemble as potential mates for one another. Each verse featured a new couple of small groups of ensemble members for whom Dolly to partner up and create couples. Sometimes the men rejected their options and sometimes a small group crossed the stage doing stylized run/jog steps ignoring the chance to be matched. The only time the entire ensemble appeared together was on the final list (“I twist a little, stir a little, him a little, her a little...” (Stewart and Herman 7)) as they crossed from stage left to right repeating the pull step.

At the end of this piece, Dolly made her first appearance on the passerelle to be as close to the audience as possible for her first prayer to Ephraim. As her speech was interrupted by Ambrose, she returned to the main stage to sing her reprise and exit the stage with a kiss to the audience, suggesting she’s in control and there’s more to come. The scene shift to Vandergelder’s was achieved by having the marching band travel on the passerelle to cover the entrance of the Hay and Feed store. As fluid as Gower Champion envisioned, the scene change music ends exactly as Vandergelder and Ermengarde reach center stage speaking their dialogue immediately following the button of the music.

“It Takes A Woman”

Less is more with this number, and the staging reflects Horace’s contrast in work from that of his employees. Remaining center stage and delivering his lecture through song, Horace is

interrupted by the entrance of the shop workers, or “instant glee club” as referred to in the script (Stewart and Herman 11). The ensemble men appear and disappear instantaneously, remaining still, formal, and rigid, just the way Vandergelder approves. It’s not until the final chorus that the movement becomes more chaotic and out of style. Keeping Vandergelder still in the center of all this action reminds the audience of the constant divide between Horace and the ever-changing society and culture around him.

As the song ends, Horace demands the men “Get out of here” as Dolly enters with Ambrose Kemper, sneaking him upstairs under the concealment of the ensemble’s exit. A problem with this moment is that it was so visually wild and involved, but there was no music to cover it. I went back to the end of “It Takes A Woman” to repeat the final four bars to use as a quick tag. The visual energy of this moment is chaotic, so the oscillating minor seconds from the accompaniment served as an aural support for this exit.

“Put On Your Sunday Clothes”

Gower Champion made the decision to use a passerelle as part of his staging, because it “created intimacy by bringing the characters within arm’s reach of the audience. It also created a diversion, for it allowed the viewers to concentrate on the activity in front of the proscenium while scenery was flown or dropped in behind” (Cintron 80). With each performance, I witnessed the magic created by having the actors traverse the passerelle. The simplest movement of having the cast parade their “Sunday clothes” garnered instant applause from the audience. The plan was to build a passerelle between the audience and the pit and eliminate the first row of seats in the theatre. In my specific space, the distance of the pit to the edge of the passerelle is

significantly longer than that of the original and touring productions. This distance demanded a longer time to approach and disembark from the passerelle and took away valuable counts in the music to provide the desired staging. The choreographer and I adjusted and modified specific moments to achieve the look.

One of the trickiest moments came in the act one costume parade, “Put on Your Sunday Clothes.” As designed, this number is meant to showcase the extravagant and refined costumes. The actors entered up stage right from the third wing and crossed to down stage left to the passerelle. Again, distance was the enemy, and in the large and sometimes cumbersome costumes, getting the actors to take larger steps on beat was not allowing them to reach their assigned spots in time. To solve this problem the actors took the final eight counts from the transition music to walk on stage, and began the cross downstage left starting somewhat slightly on stage from the second wing. The design of the number is to showcase the costumes, and this alteration did not affect the desired result.

The transition from the train station to Mrs. Molloy’s hat shop is another moment of Champion’s fluid staging; this time the façade of the hat stop is set as Minnie Fay travels the passerelle with a hat box, displaying her bouncy and energetic personality through her walk.

“Motherhood March”

The main objective in this scene is to display the out-of-control situation in which these characters have found themselves. Even without doors in the set for the scene, my goal was to create a slamming door farce energy with Cornelius and Barnaby. The song is a straightforward march, and the objective of the women is to keep Horace distracted as they try to conceal

Cornelius and Barnaby from him. This number proved difficult to rehearse and stage. The song is very short, but it is very dense with specific moments that have to time out precisely. The actors were not prepared for the type of specificity required of them. A lot of rehearsal time was spent on timing out the distance of the cross from the closet to the hat shop counter, as well as how long it took for Dolly and Horace to position themselves in specific directions at exact times. The physical requirement to display the silliness and running around also exhausted the actors, so we were only able to run it only three or four times before we needed to break. The hard work paid off, however, and this song became one of the actors' and my favorite scenes in the show.

“Dancing”

This was the first number we chose to choreograph, because it is the largest production number in act one and involves the entire cast, sans Horace. The first section rehearsed was the company's section out on the streets of New York. From a storytelling perspective, Dolly's spell has been cast beyond the walls of the hat shop and the entire town is now in celebration of the joy she brought by matching people together and teaching non-dancers how to dance. The initial plan was to separate the ensemble into two groups by skill set, which would allow the more technically proficient dancers to perform the difficult steps, and create simpler steps for those less experienced. The costumer and I discussed which ladies needed to be in a skirt which was less restricting and flowed easily to facilitate the higher kicks and faster spins. The structure of this song and the final choreography, however, yielded no discernible difference between each

student, and it provided a seamless transition from one group to the next, which culminated in one large section featuring the entire ensemble.

The first half of the song presents Dolly's successful dance lesson to Cornelius and Barnaby, followed by her matchmaking skills as she finally pairs Cornelius with Irene and Barnaby with Minnie. The key to getting the plot through to the audience was to keep the action and dance moves simple. Transitioning from the store into the street required actors to strike the set, but this also kept some actors being able to begin the dance section. The first group of ensemble dancers entered downstage while the lights upstage went to more of a blue hue to cover the set strike. From then on, every group would enter and exit the empty stage, but it never quite felt empty; there was always that sense of fluidity which kept the audience engaged and entranced with the choreography and storytelling.

"Before the Parade Passes By"

Simplicity was the key for this song. As Dolly proclaimed she wanted to join the parade, the ensemble entered in their various parade outfits (opera singers, suffragettes, athletes, Spirit of 14th Street mascots, firefighters, and waiters) and promenaded across the passerelle to return to their starting positions, all in an elaborate march. Each sub group had a unique step to perform on the instrumental march section.

The original plan was to have the grand drape fly in during Dolly's monologue and rise halfway through the song with the ensemble and banners in position behind the curtain. Because of the slow speed of the curtain, there truly was not enough time to bring the curtain in, have everyone get in place, and then fly it out in time for their vocal entrance. I decided to bring them

onstage during the previous verse and have them collectively move downstage prior to singing. This was also carefully timed out with the entrance of the parade banners, which had to be flown in on the slow fly system. The plan was to have the banners reach their final hanging position right as the ensemble moved downstage, so as to not hit anyone in the face or get caught on one of the signs that various actors were holding up. A few rehearsals did cause some minor grazing of the fabric banners by a sign or an actor's head, but the more it was rehearsed, the cleaner it became until the timing was perfected.

I needed to add some exit music for the ensemble once the song ended, because there was none written in the original score for this moment. I found it jarring to have this strong ensemble march off the stage in silence. I used the final seven bars of "Before the Parade Passes By" to serve as a tag and accompany the company's exit.

The short reprise of this song to end the act had such a finality to the sound of it, and it contained the only blackout in Act One. Because of this, the final button had to be visually sharp, and I could not wait for the grand drape to take the full 34 seconds to fly in. I decided to bring Dolly out on the passerelle to sing and collect a drum major marching baton from our conductor to allow the time needed for the grand to fly in behind her. This staging gave me the sharp blackout and quick house lights up transition I needed for the end of the act.

"Elegance"

I had very limited space on stage between the Harmonia Gardens drop and the edge of the stage, so this number was treated as stylistic staging more so than choreography. The original choreography took Cornelius, Barnaby, Irene, and Minnie onto the passerelle, but the music was

not long enough to cover the time it took for them to enter and exit the passerelle. Due to this, I adjusted the staging to keep them on the apron and used the distance between stage right and stage left as the way to contrast their blocking and positions. The instinct of the actors was to play very far right, which placed most of the action on stage right as they travelled to center stage and back. While perfectly fine, it seemed off balance to me to have the entire song played in one spot. I adjusted the distances on the traveling steps to utilize more width of the stage, and kept some of the positions purposefully off center, but created a better usage of the entire space.

“Waiters Gallop”

Like “Dancing,” in act one, this is the biggest production number in act two. The farcical nature of the show needed to be conveyed back and forth through the waiters’ entrances and exits that surround the short vignettes of the principal characters who enter and order their meals in the Harmonia Gardens. The choreographer created a tight and exhausting sequence which featured the talents of every student. I chose to cast my less skilled movers as chefs, to keep them involved in the scene but to prevent them from having to learn, and possibly poorly execute, any difficult steps. This also added to the storytelling element of using head waiter Rudolph to instruct both the waiters and the chefs in the operation of the Harmonia Gardens.

In the original set design, there were no curtains hanging around the two tables in this scene. Because of their absence from the stage I needed to find a moment to strike the tables from the stage because I could not have empty tables during the next song, “Hello, Dolly!” We rehearsed with this planned empty space on stage. About two weeks after the number was staged, the solution for mounting curtains on the wagons which contained the tables arrived, and we

went back and re-rehearsed this juggernaut of a number with that positioning. Fortunately, the staging was clean enough so that other than changing a few entrance and exit locations, a major overhaul of the number was not needed.

Rehearsing with a flat floor-taped staircase is one thing, but when the actual set piece arrived, it threw off some timing of choreography. The students just underestimated the amount of work it would take to ascend and descend stairs while carrying props. The simplest of movement now caused a hold up in timing, and drilling of these entrances and exits was the way to solve this. I didn't have to alter much; it was just the repeated rehearsal in the space on the set pieces that the students needed to lock in and successfully execute these moments.

“Hello, Dolly”

Because it is the most iconic song in the show, the expectation from the audience was high. Part of the charm of this number is its simple staging, which is clean and precise. I told the students that applause would likely occur during the staircase descent and on the duck walk steps in the final chorus. They are both simple moments, but the joy they bring, coupled with the jazzy music, creates a moment like none other. Some theatre scholars and patrons have argued Dolly's staircase descent is the greatest entrance in musical theatre history, so the stakes were very high. By this point in the show, the audience is on Dolly's side and to see her dressed up tugs at their heartstrings so they applaud out of approval, love, and support.

The goal again for my production was to replicate the simplicity of the original staging in this number. The obstacle came with the time it took to get Dolly front and center on the passerelle. Alterations were made in one verse by having the boys step kick while traveling,

instead of stepping and kicking in place. This placed Dolly on the corners of the passerelle, instead of on extreme stage right or left on the apron, and afforded her less distance to travel. While unsafe, the choreographer initially wanted the boys to jump over the pit and land on the passerelle for “you’re looking swell, Dolly!,” but the pit distance was just too far and the inexperienced boys would have more than likely missed the landing and been injured. The decision was made to have the boys start heading towards the passerelle on the preceding phrase, “it’s so nice to have you back where you belong.” Once they were close to their final spots, the boys spun in place, and ended on a knee, which created the same physical punctuation to the phrase contained in the original staging.

The dinner scene which follows this song was one of the more difficult moments to rehearse. Timing is everything with comedy, and neophyte actors need the repetition of sequence to deliver the desired results. The addition of onstage food made it even more difficult, because Dolly’s timing was thrown off once practical props were in front of her. I reminded the actress that Dolly does little to no eating in the scene as she is distracting Horace with her fast talking and constant motion. The actor playing Horace also wanted to add comical bits, but I had to constantly remind him that less is more. Horace’s reactions were funny enough, and adding extra bits drew the eye of the audience away from the intended action that I needed them to witness. One of the bits he wanted to add was taking his time to eat his food. He was already directed to be slow eating after he stands and Dolly tells him to sit, but the moment he wanted to add with eating slowly was before that blocking. In the scene, this was the first time Horace was able to eat, so he would be quick about it before Dolly interrupts him. Any hesitation in this moment would be contrived and only add to the quiet time on stage.

The chaotic transition to the courtroom made good use of the passerelle, and it brought every actor across it while the courtroom drop flew in and crew members placed the judge's stand and witness stand. The orchestra played wildly and quickly, and each cast member had a story to tell as they entered the courtroom (hurt foot, upset at losing the contest, confused why their character was arrested if they didn't do anything, etc.). Fortunately, this music was long enough to cover the slow entrance of the courtroom drop on the fly system.

One of the funniest moments in the play comes when the judge asks if there is anyone to represent the ensemble, and they all look towards Dolly, who is continuing to eat her dinner from the prior scene. The dumpling bit becomes one of the most memorable moments in the show, because in this two-minute silence Dolly discovered how much she loves eating her dumplings and was unaware that the full company was staring at her. For this moment, I had to find something that was quick to eat and wouldn't pose a challenge to the actress. The actress, prop designer, and I settled upon white cotton candy shaped into spheres to emulate "dumplings, lighter than air" (Stewart and Herman 46). Fortunately, my actress did not need any acting coaching in this moment, as she was happy to eat candy on stage and react to how good it tastes. The moment worked perfectly, and the only challenge arose in keeping the other onstage actors from laughing.

"It Only Takes A Moment"

The beauty of this scene is in the simplicity of staging. Cornelius remained mostly still with a spotlight focused on him which acted almost like a camera zoom, and this captivated the audience with his honest and heartfelt expression of love. Being the first and only real ballad of

act two, this moment was further highlighted because it contrasted with the mayhem of the scene that preceded it. The silly energy returned after the song, when the judge cried tears of inspiration and dismissed the charges of the company, except for Horace Vandergelder.

“So Long, Dearie”

This number had to cover the scene change from Harmonia Gardens back to Vandergelder’s Hay and Feed store. Because these were the largest sets, the grand drape needed to lower to conceal the switch over. Originally, Horace was to stay put in the courtroom as the grand drape fell in front of him. Because the actor had a costume change and the speed of the drape was far too slow, I decided to have Dolly shove Horace offstage right as she grabbed his hat and cane and moved downstage on the passerelle. This shift in visual focus brought Dolly closer to the audience for the big ending, as well as provided a clear stage for the scene transition to occur.

In other productions of *Hello, Dolly!*, Dolly renews for this song in a brand new costume. This costume would not be used in any other scene, just this one. I could not find the rationale or logic behind having Dolly reenter the same scene, on the same evening, only a few minutes later, in a new dress. Where did this dress come from? Why would she change into it? Did she have it in storage at the courtroom? Additionally, the logistics and added financial burden of making yet another outfit for the leading lady would only add to the cost and build of the show. I kept Dolly in her iconic red dress for as long as possible and it saved everyone from another superfluous quick change.

“Finale”

The curtain rose back on Vandergelder’s Hay and Feed store, and Horace repeated Dolly’s “you go your way, and I’ll go mine” line and gesture. Because the actress playing Dolly was in the midst of a quick change, I instructed Horace to take his time making the discovery of the same direction gesture. It also helped that the grand drape was raised with music underscoring, and that afforded more time for the costume change. The first dress rehearsal was a disaster, and Dolly completely missed her cue. We then practiced the change in the moment, and the crew and actress found their rhythm and were able to perform this costume change seamlessly.

Horace chooses not to dance in his life and claims not to. Dolly used another one of her cards to inform him that she is a dance teacher, and Horace surrendered. As this was the final union of the two characters who have been apart the longest in the play, it was imperative to keep their movement simple and delicate. In addition, my actor playing Horace was not a mover or dancer in any way, shape, or form. I guided him through a very mechanical sequence which helped fill the time of the song. He was instructed to step forward on verse two, extend his hand on one line, take Dolly’s hand on another, and then slowly rotate in place while swaying in a dance position with Dolly.

The students who played Dolly and Horace feared that they were going to be required to kiss in this final scene, but I assuaged their concern by not having the characters kiss. Dolly says it’s not a romantic relationship that she’s after, nor does Horace seem to be in love with her. Horace knows he needs a woman to be complete, and Dolly knows Horace has the money she can use to carry out Ephraim’s wishes. An embrace was all that was needed between these two

and gave the closure needed to the story and to their journey coming together. Keeping them in an embrace was the final image as the lights blacked out and the set was struck.

CHAPTER SIX: MUSICAL DIRECTION

Contemporary musical theatre has expanded the skill set required of actors. Vocal ranges, in particular, have expanded to more of a belty, higher tessitura range for men and women alike. The structure of contemporary harmony writings prefers closed voicings rather than open ones. Written in the early 60s, *Hello, Dolly!* contrasts all these contemporary notions of style and structure, and therefore provides a challenge for young novice actors who have been raised and introduced to the art through contemporary musical theatre literature only. I have male students whose voices are still deepening who cannot hit the lowest bass notes written, unlike in other contemporary musicals with which they have experience that are not written that low on the staff. The same is true for the sopranos—their prior experience has not taken them that high on the staff for that long of a duration.

One of the first decisions I made as a musical director was to use the alternate keys for Dolly's songs. Tams Witmark (now Concord Theatricals) recognizes that the original keys for Dolly's songs are written in such a lower, almost tenor, range, that it would prove difficult for many actresses to sing. Even though the role of Dolly Levi isn't known for its robust vocal prowess, audibility and clarity is still required for the role. With young, teenage voices, Carol Channing's keys would prove impossible and impractical to use for this production. Even prior to casting the role of Dolly, I made the decision to order and pay for the transposed keys. These keys were all raised generally a perfect fourth or fifth higher, which placed most of the songs in a strong alto range. The transposition created a new challenge as the ensemble music was now placed in a difficult range.

The raised keys for “Put on Your Sunday Clothes,” “Motherhood March,” “Before the Parade Passes By,” and “So Long Dearie” did not pose much of a challenge as these songs mainly only transposed Dolly’s verses, and modulated to the original keys for the remaining characters or ensemble voicings. “Dancing” added a challenge to Cornelius and Barnaby’s interjections, which placed them either at the lowest part of the boys’ registers, or forced them to sing things up the octave on very high pitches. Both options caused the same inaudibility of their phrases. I instructed both of the boys to half sing/half talk these one-liners, and the story and words shone through without any odd delivery.

Working with the students on these challenges proved frustrating. On multiple occasions I had to remind myself that I was working with non-music minded students, and give specific instruction note-by-note and phrase-by-phrase. Articulation was my first plan of attack. I notated my score with my desired result, and then talked through these markings with the students. I used basic terms like “short” and “smooth” to ensure their understanding.

One accommodation was to respell the harmonies. My intent was not to make it sound contemporary, but by using closed voicing harmonies, the vocal lines were now (mostly) in parallel motion, providing a little more structure and comfort in the whole sound.

One thing missing from the score is articulation of the vocal lines. From listening to various recordings, I decided what type of phrasing I liked best and wrote it in to share with the cast. My previous experience working with high schoolers has taught me they like to imitate a recording. In their mind, if that is how the Broadway performer did it, then that will be how they perform because it is perceived to be “good” and the greatest indicator of their talent. Providing students with examples they could reference seemed to be the best way to implement my

choices. I would have to identify which recording to reference and sometimes demonstrate the desired effect myself; simple instructions were not always clear enough for the novice vocalist. I spent a major time of the initial music rehearsals demonstrating exactly how to sing the phrasing. The students responded successfully to this, because they now had something tangible to replicate, versus just having instructions to follow.

Challenges arose with getting the students to sing at the ends of their ranges. The soprano music is written very high, and similarly, the bass music utilizes the lowest parts of the male voice. I utilized warm ups to get all students, regardless of voice type, to force them to sing all notes of their vocal range. Trilling was the first instruction before opening up to an “ooh” vowel. The natural tendency of the students was to begin with a glottal onset in the higher register. This would sometimes cause an overshoot of the pitch, and I reminded them to ease into the sound with a simultaneous onset. This skill took practice, but it became easier over time. I had the most success with using the “nyah” twang placement to achieve lower notes out of all students, but especially the basses. Warm ups were sung on the “nyah” sound, descending from the fifth degree of the scale to the first. On multiple occasions I would remind them to keep going and to “make it uglier,” as they were backing off from the forward placement because it was not a pretty sound to them.

This technique was also used when learning the bass line of “Put on Your Sunday Clothes.” During the initial teaching of the parts, I had the men sing pitches on the “nyah” to illustrate and confirm they could produce a louder sound on that pitch. From there, we would very slowly and change from the “nyah” to the written vowel. At any time the students lost power, I would take them back to the “nyah” and have them start over. After they mastered the

volume placement, we then added consonants. It was a foreign process to them; they certainly felt like it was a long time just for a few notes, however, it did help get those bottom notes out.

I made the decision to only have two first sopranos sing in the overall mix of the show. I had more altos than sopranos in my cast, and I didn't want to compromise the overall blend and mix by splitting the sopranos evenly between the first and second parts. The pitches that were sung by the first sopranos were high enough to carry over the entire ensemble mix and be heard.

"Call on Dolly"

Articulation was the driving force of this number. There were no articulation marks written in the original score. Albeit short, the piece does lay the foundation for the musical sound of the show, and my intent was to establish a crispness among the ensemble. The characterization and ambience of the townspeople is one of sharpness and precision; the townspeople's poses, posture, and limited movement in the piece are punctuated on the downbeat and the same needed to be true of the sound. As written, the vocal line is solely quarter and eighth notes.

My assignment was to sing the phrase "Call on Dolly, she's the one the spinsters recommend" staccato, and then slur the phrase "just name the kind of man your sister wants..." I continued this pattern of short and staccato durations versus long and smooth phrasing throughout the remainder of the song. This added contrast and a calculated exactness to the delivery, and emphasized the instruction and personal connection the men had to women on the sister lyric, and it further unified the ensemble as one sound and mindset.

“I Put My Hand In”

This song is straight forward. Dolly mostly talk sung this piece, and occasionally slurred the phrase, “I put my hand in” to give the piece some musicality. There were no ensemble voices written in the original score, even though they are physically present in the song. The 1994 revival tour added some “oohs” and “ahs” on the bridge of the song, and a new arrangement of back up voices also appeared in the 2017 production. I added some unison “oohs” to mimic one of the string harmonies in six bars to give the ensemble a vocal presence and vocally support Dolly.

“It Takes A Woman”

“It Takes A Woman” introduces Horace Vandergelder and the male ensemble. They enter the hay and feed store and sing a rousing and lively march, which establishes their youthful, masculine energy and their shared opinion of the female sex. Their refrain is written with half notes for the phrases “it takes a woman, a dainty woman,” and “it takes a woman, a fragile woman” (Herman 26). Each time this phrase is repeated, the durations of “takes a,” “dainty,” and “fragile” remain as half notes.

I incorporated the changes from the 2017 revival: the “takes a” phrases were sung as staccato quarter notes, and I placed space in between those words. The adjectives “dainty” and “fragile” were sung as slurred half notes, and this phrasing provided more emphasis on the adjectives to help the repeated melody and lyrics stand out from the previous versions.

The final four bars of harmony divide the men into four parts, with the tenor 1 line stretching my students' abilities and ranges. I eliminated the B/A# harmony from the mix, but kept a nice three-part voicing with the melody on top. In such a visually busy moment on stage, coupled with loud brass support in the orchestra, this melodic line was not missed by anyone.

“Put On Your Sunday Clothes”

Diction is paramount in this song. The mood of the song is refined and elegant, and requires a crispness to the sound to achieve that effect. The unison entrance of voice worked as the actors were physically entering the space couple by couple, and their sound would build with each new couple's entrance. The ensemble began singing in harmony at measure 115, and by this time all members were on stage. I only had an ensemble of only 12 men, and several of them were novices to the musical theatre experience and singing in parts. The male harmony is written in three parts, which would afford me four voices on a part. However, the imbalance of my actors' ranges led me to reduce the voicings to two, placing a solid six members on each part. I eliminated the printed bass line, which merely doubled the melody down the octave. This kept the overall sound in a tighter voicing.

The altos had the most difficult part in this song as they were starting on the sixth of each chord. Unfortunately, there were no instruments playing this note and this was something that had to be drilled in each rehearsal until it became muscle memory for them. As part of the warmup I would have everyone sing the line prior (“That Sunday shine is a certain sign that you feel as fine as you look”) and then stop and hold their starting note of harmony in measure 115. After hearing the altos land this note successfully, I would have them do the exact same thing

with staging in the space. Overall, I discovered that standing still and singing the notes is a simple task, but once paired with staging and costumes/props, the success becomes less regular.

“Motherhood March”

The only addition/alteration I made to this piece was to add harmony for the final chord. The physical action in this song dominated the song, and the melody did not need any enhancement because the vocal line is the last thing to which the audience is paying attention. The addition of a triad for the final note split amongst the three women served as a simple final button for the piece.

“Dancing”

As this song is mostly dance music, the only real challenge vocally was timing of the speech and initial clarinet solo. My Dolly wanted to rush this phrase and neither the moment nor the music call for a quick interpretation of this line. After instructing her to pretend she’s teaching Algebra to a first grader, she understood the delicacy with which to deliver these dance instructions to Cornelius.

From an orchestral perspective, I tinkered with percussion in this song to match the staging. I added a few cymbal crashes throughout the dance music to support lifts and kicks, as well as adding a strong timpani roll and release in measures 324-326 to support the build of the music and culmination of choreography to a larger ensemble’s entrance.

“Before the Parade Passes By”

This was another piece that suffered from a lack of written articulation. Since the accompaniment starting at measure 124 is staccato, I miciked this in the vocal parts and kept most of the notes staccato and separate. The triplets “when the pa-,” “listen and hear,” “harmony,” “pardon me,” and “spirit is” were slurred, with everything else short and clipped.

This gave a power to the ensemble because it was the first time they sang in the piece as well as the first time their movement halted. The unity formed by having everyone stand and sing in such precision gave a power and clean exactness to the piece. Moving into measure 140, the duration of the notes was now sung as written, and longer phrasing was achieved by slurring the words mostly in four bar phrases. This effect added contrast and enhanced the return of physical movement from the staging, as well as the introduction of more instruments in the accompaniment.

As the cast built in power and volume to culminate in their instrumental promenade around the passerelle, I changed the choral chord in measure 168 to support the expansion in the accompaniment. As written originally, the vocal line was an F and an A against the FMAJ7 chord in the accompaniment. I expanded this by having the second sopranos sing an E5 instead of the written F5 to have this seventh scale pitch ring out and complement the melody line that was played in the accompaniment.

The short reprise of this song is still oddly in the original Carol Channing key, which placed it in a lower range for my Dolly. While not impossible to sing, it didn’t ring or resonate the same way the full length song did. I relied upon the position of Dolly being on the passerelle

and close to the audience as well as the addition of the sparkling marching band baton to enhance the power of this number. Both of those additions worked out well.

“Elegance”

This was another straightforward song that did not require any embellishment or tinkering. A few articulation and phrasing directions cleared up the “elegant” tone and provided the actors with places to breathe. I originally toyed with adding harmony to the final chord, but after trying it out, I found it took away from the power of their movement and character, so I restored it to the unison note.

“Hello, Dolly”

Using the transposed key for this song, difficulties arose in the men’s limitations with projection. I had women singing offstage but wanted to make sure the vocal lines carried. The transposition proved most difficult in its revoicing, as the first male chorus of the song was still in the original key but now modulated to a new key for the bridge, which placed it a difficult range for the men to sing and project. (“I went away from the lights of Fourteenth Street...”). I eliminated the written “hums” that underscored these measures and initially replaced it with an “ooh” to allow these notes to carry farther. The inexperience of the boys singing in these close harmonies proved difficult, and I ultimately eliminated the back-up voices in this section altogether.

Each time the phrase “Dolly will never go away again” or “Promise you’ll never go away again” was sung, it was in a new key with a slightly different harmony. Only the melody

remained constant. This was another section that was written in four parts, and I eliminated the baritone line, keeping a bass foundation and splitting the tenors into two parts. This was a section that had to be drilled over and over, as the actors had a difficult time executing these close but different harmonic lines.

“It Only Takes A Moment”

The actor playing Cornelius is a skilled and fine vocalist. He worked on this piece with his vocal coach but had a few odd habits I had to break. To give shape to the longer lines, he would decrescendo in odd places (“...for your *eyes* to *meet* and *then*...”). I would have to stop him in the middle of the run to point out to him that he was doing that, for he was unaware when it was happening. By talking through the characterization and intent of each line, he would come to understand how decrescendoing in those moments was working against the intention of the character of Cornelius. There were several performances where he reverted to this habit, and I attribute this to his nerves. While it was not character-breaking or moment-ruining, it was just a minor detail that annoyed me.

The ensemble entrance of part 2 contained harmony that began high in pitch. The ladies were in a constant three-part harmony while the men had the melody. This was a number that I revoiced to keep the melody on top of both voicings, and it grew from a unison sound to a full choral harmony by the time measure 8 arrives (“It only takes a moment”). The result was a beautiful choral reiteration of the “thesis” of Cornelius’ discovery.

“So Long, Dearie”

The joyful thing about this song was it allowed the actress playing Dolly to shine. An actor portraying Dolly does not have to be a superb vocalist, as the part was written for someone with a limited vocal range but serious comedic acting chops. I lucked out in that my student also has a powerhouse voice, and this song allowed her to shine. Using the transposed key, this song sat in the middle of her range, and allowed her to use her belt more than any other song in the show. The song is mostly talk sung, with the occasional growl or slide introduced on ending words of phrases. The final section after the bridge (“Don’t come a knockin’...”) served as the audition cut for the show, but also afforded the most room for embellishment. Working with the actress playing Dolly, we decided to take her final note (“...so long ago”) up to an E5 and showcase the actress’ vocal prowess and the character’s resolute decision. As a back-up, we had the traditional growling slide from G# down to E ready to go, should her voice not be ready for the high belt. In most rehearsals she defaulted to the slide but gave the high E during every performance. It was an inspirational moment for the audience each night.

“Finale”

The actor playing Horace was not a singer, nor did he claim to be. Fortunately, “It Takes A Woman” is mostly sung/spoke, but his melodic “Hello, Dolly” lines in the finale proved challenging for him. While working with me at the piano, he was very diligent, singing nearly exactly what was on the page in terms of pitch and duration. Getting him to break out of his detached syllabic singing was difficult. We tried it together with me singing along, and he was successful in singing the phrasing, but when he was left to running it in rehearsal without anyone

singing with him and the track, he would default to the robotic delivery. I instructed him to listen to the 2017 revival to hear how actor David Hyde Pierce delivered this line very conversationally. It wasn't until the orchestra arrived and we added a flute playing his melody with him that he broke of his patterns and sang appropriately. If anything, the flautist was grateful for something else to play.

As it exists in the original score, the finale is sort of a megamix which reprises the songs "Hello, Dolly," "Dancing," "It Only Takes A Moment," and "Put On Your Sunday Clothes." The reprises serve as a time cover for Dolly to have yet another costume change for her bow. As written, Dolly and Horace sing a verse of "Hello, Dolly." The couple exited and Irene and Cornelius entered to continue the song. I found it odd to the narrative that Irene and Cornelius would reenter the Vandergelder's Hay and Feed store to begin singing a song neither character has heard before in the show nor have any purpose singing. The show needed a formal ending.

The conductor and I chose to use measure 41 as an ending. Measures 39 – 42 serve as a transposition to Eb major, bridging Horace's key to Irene and Cornelius'. As this was the end of the Horace/Dolly scene (and the end of the show altogether), I took measure 41 and ended the piece on beat 3 (F major chord – which happened to be the tonic of the key of the song). I took the trumpet part up the octave and added a timpani and cymbal roll to reinforce the resolution of the accompaniment and give time for the second blackout in the show.

The orchestra continued with the melody to "Hello, Dolly," starting at measure 43 and playing through until the end of the song. The actors rejoined with singing on "Put On Your Sunday Clothes," as their bows were complete and they took another journey around the passerelle to buy time for Dolly's entrance to follow at measure 173.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

From her genesis in *The Matchmaker*, Dolly Gallagher Levi has been fast talking her way to create happiness for her clients and the world around her. Jerry Herman's musicalization of *The Matchmaker* introduced Dolly Levi to a new generation of audience members in a flashier and jazzier way. The Dr. Phillips High School Theatre Magnet was able to experience the magic of Dolly firsthand in February of 2020.

Personally, with each rehearsal I surprised myself on the amount of specificity required in each moment. There were acting rehearsals where I found myself spending a lot of time on the delivery of a word, or the specific positioning of the body. Musically, I found myself discovering new moments to enhance and support the action appearing on stage. Every rehearsal was another chance to explore this story and bring these characters to life.

Faculty, parent, and patron reactions displayed the success of the production. Many who had never seen the show before complimented us on the production and the remarked on the experience they had by seeing it come to life on the stage. Families were surprised with the amount of detail put into the dancing, acting, singing, and technical elements of the piece.

Hello, Dolly! was always in the top of my list of favorite shows, and this experience cemented it as the leader. The story brings a charming, whimsical, heartfelt, and touching story to life in through a fluid and musical spectacle. Watching the students learn and fall in love with this piece was the most rewarding part of this process. Many of them thought they knew the show, or at least had a preconceived notion of what the process would be. They surprised themselves with the work required, the skill level required, and the amount of fun they had bringing these characters to life.

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