Not Quite The Ingenue: The Development Of The Middle-aged Female Character In Musical Theatre

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NOT QUITE THE INGÉNUE:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDDLE-AGED FEMALE
CHARACTER IN MUSICAL THEATRE

by

TARA D. SNYDER
B.M. Capital University, 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of Theatre
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ABSTRACT

Not Quite the Ingénue: The Development of the Middle-Aged Female Character in Musical Theatre is an exploration of the influences which have defined the function of middle-aged female characters within the musical theatre genre. This author was cast in the role of Arlene MacNalley, a forty-three year old woman, in the University of Central Florida’s fall 2006 production of the musical Baby. Preparation for performance of this thesis role required identification of the traits and factors which would be vital for a realistic and relevant portrayal of Arlene.

This document provides the reader with a working definition of middle age. It also furnishes a sampling of types, or stereotypes, of middle age female characters in musicals. The major thrust of the document emphasizes researching and understanding the importance of key socio-economic events’ influence on the creation, direction, or depiction of middle-aged female characters.

Three distinct characters are used to develop this theory, Aunt Eller in Oklahoma!, Dolly Levi in Hello, Dolly! and Arlene MacNalley in Baby. Further analysis within the thesis details essential differences between the original version of Arlene and the updated 2006 version of Arlene portrayed in the University of Central Florida’s production of Baby. Conclusions drawn from the research, performance and writing processes indicate an increasing significance for the middle age female character as the genre of musical theatre continues to develop.
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Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some people stay for awhile, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.

- Flavia Weedn

Completing a thesis involves more than choosing a topic, selecting a committee, and doing research and writing; rather, it is the culmination of the whole graduate school experience. Each of my classes, interactions with faculty and fellow students, and my various academic and performance opportunities are represented in some way in this document. When I decided upon my thesis topic, I received not only support, but genuine enthusiasm, from my chosen thesis committee. Their encouragement helped me to know that, like my graduate school experience, writing my thesis would not be just beneficial, but also enjoyable. The following acknowledgments are shared with grateful recognition for each party’s unique contribution during the past two years:

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... ix  
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ................................................................................ 1  
CHAPTER TWO: MIDDLE AGE AND CHARACTER TYPES ........................................ 4  
Definitions of Middle Age .............................................................................................. 4  
Middle-Aged Female Character Types in Musical Theatre........................................... 5  
Type 1- Old Maid ........................................................................................................ 5  
Type 2- Over-Protective Mother ................................................................................... 6  
Type 3- Villainess ....................................................................................................... 7  
Type 4- Diva ............................................................................................................... 8  
Type 5- Experienced Worldly Woman ....................................................................... 8  
Type 6- Fading Beauty .............................................................................................. 10  
Type 7- Comedic Relief ............................................................................................. 11  
Type 8- Wise Nurturer ............................................................................................... 12  
Type 9- Plot Architect ................................................................................................ 13  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 14  
CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPING THE “WOMAN OF A CERTAIN AGE” .............. 15  
Aunt Eller in Oklahoma! ............................................................................................... 15  
Dolly in Hello, Dolly! ................................................................................................. 21  
Arlene in Baby .............................................................................................................. 26  
Arlene in Baby- 2006 Version ..................................................................................... 31  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 38  
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF BABY ................................................................. 40  
Musical Collaborators ................................................................................................. 40  
Richard Maltby, Jr. ..................................................................................................... 40  
David Shire .................................................................................................................. 41  
Sybille Pearson ............................................................................................................. 41  
Productions .................................................................................................................... 42  
Critical Reviews ............................................................................................................ 42  
Structural Analysis ........................................................................................................ 44  
Inciting Incident .......................................................................................................... 44  
Character Descriptions ............................................................................................... 45  
Lizzie Fields ................................................................................................................. 45  
Danny Hooper ............................................................................................................. 45  
Arlene MacNalley ....................................................................................................... 46  
Alan MacNalley .......................................................................................................... 46  
Pam Sakarian ............................................................................................................... 46  
Nick Sakarian .............................................................................................................. 46  
Doctor ......................................................................................................................... 47  
Professor Weiss and Dean Webber ............................................................................. 47  
Mr./Ms. Hart ............................................................................................................... 47  

vii
Ensemble- Students, “Ladies”, Nurses, Narrators ................................................ 47
Themes ...................................................................................................................... 47
Tone .......................................................................................................................... 50
Conflict ..................................................................................................................... 53
Climaxes and Conclusions ....................................................................................... 54
Analysis Summary ..................................................................................................... 56
CHAPTER FIVE: ACTOR’S JOURNALS ..................................................................... 58
  Rehearsal Journal ..................................................................................................... 58
  Performance Journal ............................................................................................... 97
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .................................................................................. 106
APPENDIX A: BREAKDOWN OF BABY SCENE-BY-SCENE .................................... 111
APPENDIX B: PRODUCTION PHOTOS FROM BABY .................................................. 129
APPENDIX C: CORRELATION OF THESIS AND GRADUATE WORK ................... 143
REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 172
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Arlene and Alan return from their 20th anniversary getaway- Act 1, Scene 1 130
Figure 2: Full cast singing "We Start Today"- Act 1, Scene 1 ................................. 130
Figure 3: Three couples learn of their pregnancies- Act 1, Scene 1 .......................... 131
Figure 4: The MacNalleys considering their pregnancy- Act 1, Scene 3 ..................... 131
Figure 5: Alan and Arlene singing "The Plaza Song"- Act 1, Scene 3 ......................... 132
Figure 6: Dancing and reminiscing about child-rearing- Act 1, Scene 4 ...................... 132
Figure 7: The three principal couples singing "Baby, Baby, Baby"- Act 1, Scene 4 ....... 133
Figure 8: Impatiently waiting for the OB/GYN- Act 1, Scene 5B .................. ............. 133
Figure 9: The women making small talk in the waiting room- Act 1, Scene 5B ......... 134
Figure 10: "Oh look. Six months." Arlene shares parenting advice- Act 1, Scene 5B ... 134
Figure 11: The ladies sing "I Want It All"- Act 1, Scene 5B ................................. 135
Figure 12: "Alan, do we really want this child?"- Act 1, Scene 10 ............................ 135
Figure 13: Arlene explains her doubt about the pregnancy- Act 1, Scene 10 .............. 136
Figure 14: Arlene tells the realtor she is pregnant- Act 1, Scene 11 .......................... 136
Figure 15: "We're going to have a baby!"- Act 1, Scene 11 ................................. 137
Figure 16: Arlene evaluates her life choices- Act 2, Scene 2 ................................. 137
Figure 17: Arlene sings "Patterns"- Act 2, Scene 2 ........................................... 138
Figure 18: Arlene wonders if she's made a mistake- Act 2, Scene 2 ......................... 138
Figure 19: Arlene speaks up about her marriage- Act 2, Scene 4 .............................. 139
Figure 20: Arlene can't get through to Alan- Act 2, Scene 4 ................................. 139
Figure 21: A family conference- Act 2, Scene 8 .............................................. 140
Figure 22: "What If We Could Love Like That?"- Act 2, Scene 8 .............................. 140
Figure 23: Danny & Lizzie, Pam & Nick, Arlene & Alan- Act 2, Scene 9 ................. 141
Figure 24: The cast gathers at the hospital- Act 2, Scene 9 ..................................... 141
Figure 25: The story goes on- Act 2, Scene 10 .................................................. 142
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In a society that glorifies youth, it can be difficult to assign value or even relevance to areas of study that do not reinforce this standard. The American entertainment industry has been one of the largest purveyors of the notion that youth and beauty are to be rewarded with power and status. However, within the musical theatre world there has always been a character category that defied this trend—that of the middle-aged woman. This character type has been especially influential in the American musical theatre over the past sixty years. Unfortunately, it is only recently that researchers have begun to examine how vital and relevant the role of the middle-aged woman is in society.

Middle-aged women, or “women of a certain age”, have long been a staple character type in musical theatre. They have served many dramatic purposes including, but not limited to, comedic relief, wise-nurturer, fading beauty, over-protective mother, old maid, and experienced worldly woman. Many of these roles were cameos or featured roles. Fortunately, the ones that could be considered supporting or even leading roles provided an actor the opportunity to portray the middle-aged woman as a fully realized and vital human being. In these settings, the middle-aged female character could make a significant impact upon the other characters with whom she interacted.

When I was cast as Arlene, a forty-three year old mother of three in the University of Central Florida’s production of Baby, I took the opportunity to examine how the middle-aged female character has developed over the years. Although the role of Arlene
will be the primary focus of this study, two other middle-aged female characters, Aunt Eller in Oklahoma!, and Dolly Levi in Hello, Dolly! will also be analyzed to establish a timeline for development. These roles were all created and premiered in approximately twenty year increments, beginning with Oklahoma! in 1943.

These strong female characters were developed through a variety of circumstances. Some roles were created for specific actresses and tailored to their strengths. Others were developed by the creative teams to appeal to an older, more affluent audience. Each of the three primary characters identified in this study was shaped by the historical time period in which her show was set. More importantly, however, the characters were influenced by the events and trends of the time period during which their respective shows were created. This influence of the world-at-large helped to develop characters that were not necessarily typical of the era in which they were supposed to live. Each of these roles was pivotal in developing an increasingly important and more complex portrayal of the middle-aged female character type. These portrayals helped to expand the type beyond the realm of the common “stereotype”.

The UCF production of Baby provided an interesting challenge for the creation of this document. While Arlene was created in the 1980’s to be a modern-day woman for her time, our production was set in 2006. Beyond completing a basic analysis of Baby, I chose to examine the important socio-economic trends which helped me create a believable modern-day woman and still adhere to the style and form of a 1983 script.

My rehearsal journal, contained in chapter five of this document, chronicles my process as an actor to believably portray a role which was almost twenty years beyond
my own life experience. Entries begin with the first rehearsal and conclude with the final performance of *Baby*. The journal describes my development of the character of Arlene through observation, research, interaction with fellow actors, and input from the director and creative staff of the musical.

Although the middle-aged female character is not quite the ingénue, it is my belief that studying the development of a more mature character type in musical theatre will help to showcase its growing importance within the genre. An academic study of this character type as a vital part in the whole of musical theatre may also help to alter the focus of the American youth-driven entertainment industry. This journey has helped me to grow as an actress, and the conclusions developed herein might serve to benefit younger actresses playing older roles, middle-aged actresses portraying women of their own age, and particularly this author as I mature and play a variety of roles. The various chapters of this document will serve to support these statements.
CHAPTER TWO: MIDDLE AGE AND CHARACTER TYPES

Definitions of Middle Age

Exactly what is middle-age? According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the average American reaching age 65 can expect to live anywhere from 17 to 20 more years. If the definition of middle-age were based solely on chronological data, then a middle-aged person would only be between the ages of 41 and 43. However, many researchers consider a much wider range of ages as part of this category. Some begin the category as young as 35 and continue onward to age 65, where the United States Census Bureau officially terms the 65+ age group as “elderly”. But middle age is not just an age. It embodies a certain level of life experience. It implies a certain sense of goal achievement. It could even be described as a definitive mindset.

For women, middle age can be defined by different factors from their male counterparts. Some women find that it is a time to “enter a more senior position” (sic Levinson 16) in the work-force. Others turn to thoughts of family. Author Stephanie Marston maintains in her book, If Not Now, When?: Reclaiming Ourselves at Midlife, that “more and more women are pursuing their careers well into their thirties and postponing motherhood until the last possible minute” (73). These older potential mothers face the reality of reduced fertility and the onset of menopause. If they are successful in achieving conception, they also face the possibility of simultaneously becoming caretakers for their children and their own aging parents. Whether this “woman of a certain age” feels she has control over her life depends upon her circumstances, but in
today’s American society she certainly has more choices available to her. She is not forced to occupy one “type” of middle age.

Middle-Aged Female Character Types in Musical Theatre

It is at this point that the real-world definition of middle age and the musical theatre definition of middle age, especially for women, diverge. Since a character only “lives” when being portrayed by an actor, the character cannot change its librettist-ascribed characteristics or destiny. Within the musical theatre genre, there exist distinctive character types often referred to as stereotypes due to their predictability and regularity. An examination of a sampling of middle-aged female roles within the genre will help to define these types.

In this study, nine specific types of middle-aged female characters will be described. There are probably many more categories and sub-categories which could be determined, but they would likely constitute a separate thesis topic. Rich characters that embody characteristics of several of these types provide the audience with glimpses of middle-aged female characters similar to their real-world counterparts.

Type 1 - Old Maid

One middle-aged female type that carried over from the world of plays to the musical’s domain was that of the old maid. This type is perhaps one of the earliest recognizable portrayals of the woman of a certain age, occurring in the 1879 original production of *The Pirates of Penzance* in the supporting character of Ruth. The old maid had never married and frequently was the victim of unrequited love. Helen, in the 1958
Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Flower Drum Song*, sings the song “Love Look Away” to her desired, but never attained friend Wang Ta. The old maid was the recipient of either pity or ridicule from her fellow characters. At times she was hilariously long-suffering as in the case of the secondary leading lady, “the dumb, but sincere [Miss] Adelaide” (Miller 61), in 1950’s *Guys and Dolls*. Other old maids, such as the featured role of Miss Lynch in the 1972 musical *Grease*, served only as comedic foils to younger, hipper characters who constantly mocked her old-fashioned ways. The old maid, as a representation of middle age femininity, is usually not a flattering one.

**Type 2- Over-Protective Mother**

The average age of first time American mothers is gradually increasing according to statistics compiled by both Child Trends Databank.org and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Despite this trend, many middle-aged women are still parents to young adult and/or adult children. It is only natural that musical creators have observed this fact and created a type which not only corresponds to this section of the population but comments about it. The over-protective mother of an adult child is frequently portrayed as over-bearing, outrageous and unreasonable. Usually when the role incorporates these characteristics, the mother fulfills a comedic purpose as does Mrs. Harcourt in *Anything Goes* (1934), Mrs. Peterson in *Bye, Bye, Birdie* (1960), Queen Agravain in *Once Upon A Mattress* (1959), or Jack’s Mother in *Into the Woods* (1987). However, the over-protective mother type can also be genuinely concerned and simply not know when her concern stifles her child’s development. This is the case for Margaret
Johnson, the mother of a developmentally challenged daughter, in 2005’s *The Light in the Piazza*.

The over-protective mother type may be looking out for her child in her own way. Bloody Mary in the 1949 Rodgers and Hammerstein classic *South Pacific* “literally gives Liat [her daughter] to Cable for sex, intending that Cable marry Liat and take her back to the States. . .” (Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin’* 263). When Lt. Cable refuses to marry Liat, Bloody Mary becomes outraged and does not allow her daughter to see Cable before his final mission. The over-protective mother’s vigilance may go to extremes. For Margaret White, in the short-lived 1998 Broadway musical *Carrie* based upon the Stephen King horror thriller of the same name, this meant fatally stabbing her offspring. The over-protective matriarch is another example of a character type that is frequently portrayed as one-dimensional.

Type 3- Villainess

Every protagonist must meet his/her antithesis. Often in musical theatre this antagonistic role is fulfilled by another type of middle-aged female character, the villainess. The villainess’ primary goal is to thwart the efforts of the hero/heroine by whatever means possible. Sometimes this type is without any redeeming qualities, as in the case of the cruel, scheming, little-girl-hating Miss Hannigan in *Annie* (1977) or the soulful, but evil, sweatshop running witch Evilene in *The Wiz* (1975). Some villainesses have tried to get the audiences on their side by showing themselves to be the victim of circumstances, as did Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* (1979), Princess Puffer in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1985), and Miss Pennywise in 2001’s *Urinetown*. Whether
spending her time double dealing in the role of Mrs. Peachum in *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), or dealing in white slavery, as Mrs. Meers in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (2002), the villainess represents a limited and harsh type for the middle-aged female character.

**Type 4- Diva**

Another female middle age character type that is not far removed from the villainess is the diva. The diva believes the world (of the musical) revolves around her. Sometimes it does, as in the case of the crazed former silent film star Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard* (1994) who does practically everything to re-establish her career. The diva’s perception is that her wishes and desires should be of the utmost importance to all around her. She is not above throwing fits, cheating, lying, stealing, or killing to have her way. Lilli Vanessi in *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) rails at all those around her, both on and offstage within the story, in this musical version of Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*.

When the plot action is structured contrary to the diva’s wishes, there will certainly be fireworks. Dorothy Brock can barely fathom that a chorus girl will perform in her stead when she breaks her ankle in *42nd Street* (1980). The character of Elizaveta Grushinskaya in *Grand Hotel* (1989) is a diva whose fury is eventually softened by the love of a younger man. Overall, the diva, while certainly a strong type, is another negative presentation of the middle age female in musical theatre.

**Type 5- Experienced Worldly Woman**

The experienced worldly woman presents a unique type of middle age femininity. Examples of this type are not uniformly negative or positive presentations of the middle-
aged female. This woman has learned many life lessons the hard way. She can be alternately cynical or optimistic. While she may not trust other characters as quickly, the characters that do get beyond her polished veneer usually become very close to her. An obvious incarnation of this type is found in sexually experienced characters like Mona Stangley from *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (1978) and Saraghina from *Nine* (1982). A different embodiment of this type occurs in the characters whose lives have given them too much and therefore left them disenchanted with everything. Characters like Vera Simpson in *Pal Joey* (1940), Joanne in *Company* (1970) and Phyllis in *Follies* (1971) best represent this version of the experienced worldly woman type.

Women like Elsa Schrader in *The Sound of Music* (1959) and the Matron in *Chicago* (1975) also could be classified as members of the experienced worldly woman category based upon their savvy and success in their respective business dealings. Some experienced worldly women don’t realize their status until other characters bring it to their attention. This is certainly the case in the musical *Mamma Mia!* (2001). Sophie, a young woman about to be married, wants her father to attend the ceremony. Not knowing his exact identity, she invites three possible candidates. This awkward situation forces Sophie’s mother Donna to confront her “free” past thereby solidifying her experienced worldly woman position. It is interesting to note that a preponderance of this role type appeared through the 1970’s-1980’s. Perhaps this was the musical theatre creators’ response to the 1960’s social upheavals of sexual freedom, women’s rights and feminism. At any rate, the experienced worldly woman type presented a version of middle age that was self-assertive, if at times morally indifferent.
Type 6- Fading Beauty

The next type is observed perhaps more frequently than any other version of the middle age female character in musical theatre. Multiple examples of the fading beauty can be found in shows from almost every decade from the 1940’s to the present. This type portrays a middle age female as she mourns the loss of her youth and beauty, qualities which formerly gave her some modicum of control over others and her own environment. How the different roles within this type deal with the unavoidable onset of age separates them from one another. Some, like Madame Dubonnet in The Boyfriend (1954) and Meg Boyd in Damn Yankees (1955), change the love relationships established in their respective youths to become centered on respect and friendship, instead of physical attraction. Luisa Contini in Nine (1982), like her 1950’s counterparts, changes the emphasis of her relationship with her husband. However, she realizes she does not have to base her worth on her husband’s opinion, and though she loves him, she can live without him if necessary. Other characters like Victoria Grant in Victor/Victoria (1995) and Paulette in Legally Blonde (2007) reinvent themselves by displaying the inner strength and determination that now outshine their fading beauty.

Unfortunately, some of the female characters within this type do not adjust to the reality of their changing appearances and positions in society. They become self-destructive in their habits and choices, or they try to cling to a reality that simply isn’t there anymore. Characters that best typify this version of the fading beauty type are Anna Maurrant from Street Scene (1947), whose adulterous activities result in her murder, Sally from Follies (1971), who attempts to reignite an old flame despite her
marital obligations, and Cassie from *A Chorus Line* (1975), who subjects herself to humiliation by attempting to compete with younger dancers for a spot in the chorus line. The fading beauty seems to be a type that transcends time and social changes to connect with female audience members as a more realistic presentation of the middle-aged woman.

**Type 7- Comedic Relief**

Middle-aged female characters can also be presented in less serious settings as in the type that serves as comedic relief. These roles depict the middle-aged female character as either appearing in humorous circumstances, or possessing a character trait that is so exaggerated as to make her the recipient of good-humored laughter. Frequently the roles within this type fall into one or more of the other types already described. Mrs. Peterson in *Bye, Bye, Birdie* is determined to make her son feel guilty for leaving his mama and pulls antics like lying in the middle of the road to gain his attention much to the audience’s amusement. Mrs. Lovett from *Sweeney Todd* is an accomplice to Sweeney’s murderous rage, but her ingenious inventions of cleverly named human meat pies can’t help but provide comic fodder. Miss Adelaide may be an old maid, but her psychosomatic cold symptoms induced by a 14-year engagement make her funny. Penelope Pennywise may be a tool of *Urinetown*’s evil control over the disadvantaged populace, but she sings an aria about the privilege of peeing—that’s just good “clean” fun.

Characters who provide only comedic relief tend to be one-dimensional. One of these roles is Madame Thenardier from *Les Misérables* (1987). Her outrageous thievery
is not so much despicable as it is hilarious, providing one of the few light points in the whole musical. The middle age female character as comedic relief is one of the more positive, if not fully developed, presentations of the character type.

Type 8- Wise Nurturer

One of the most flattering presentations of the middle-aged female character is as a wise nurturer type. The unfortunate part of this type is that it does not allow much room for the character to develop. The wise nurturers have motherly instincts, even if they are not mothers. They present a stoic, brave front during adversity. They seem to have precisely the right thing to say at the right moment. Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical works provide perhaps the archetype for the wise nurturer as demonstrated by the characters of Aunt Eller in Oklahoma! (1943), Nettie Fowler in Carousel (1945), Anna in The King and I (1951), the Queen in Cinderella (1957), and Mother Superior in The Sound of Music (1959). The leading lady role of Golde in Fiddler on the Roof may be a bit more sharp-tongued than her Rodgers and Hammerstein compatriots, but her wisdom and concern still mark her as a member of the nurturer type.

More recent wise nurturers have not had the familial connections to their primary pupil as in older musicals. This has not changed their innate characteristics to look out for the young and inexperienced and make sure they are successful. In The Phantom of the Opera, which opened on Broadway in 1988, Madame Giry is employed as the Paris Opera’s ballet mistress. She makes looking out for the career and welfare of a young chorine one of her duties. Mrs. Potts, a former housekeeper turned tea-pot, makes the union of her master, the Beast, and Belle, a visitor to the enchanted castle, her top
priority. Mother in *Ragtime* (1998) works to change her own racial prejudices and those of others in her turn-of-the-20th-century world. The wise nurturer is a gentle but firm presence in a musical. Her nature bestows the middle-aged female character with a level of respect not attained by the other types.

**Type 9- Plot Architect**

The final character type to be discussed is that of the plot architect. This middle-aged female character has every element of her world under her control. If anything happens that is outside her original plan, she finds a way to make sure all observers are none the wiser and uses the experience to her advantage. This type contains elements of many of the other types to make her successful in any situation. Frequently they are title characters. Sometimes these characters do not begin the show as middle-aged women. In this instance, the musical showcases many of their experiences as younger women before culminating in their status as middle-aged plot architects. Two roles in this category are Mame in *Mame* (1966) and Molly Brown in *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (1960). Desiree Armfeldt in Sondheim’s 1973 *A Little Night Music* is a subtle plot architect who begins to lose her ability to control everything when her true love is shot in a duel. She does manage to pull everything back into place for herself while allowing the other characters around her to shed their conventions and find happiness for themselves as well.

Dolly in *Hello, Dolly!* (1964), Mama Rose in *Gypsy* (1959), and Mrs. Sally Adams in *Call Me Madam* (1950) were all middle-aged female characters whose mere presence in a scene left other characters reeling from their electricity. Interestingly, all
three of these roles were created for belting powerhouse Ethel Merman, although Merman did not play Dolly until close to the end of its original Broadway run. The plot architect type portrays the middle-aged female character as the most fully developed and interesting of any of the types.

**Conclusion**

Middle age is a flexible concept. To that end, multiple types have been developed and utilized to portray this period of life within musical theatre. Old maid, over-protective mother, villainess, diva, experienced worldly woman, fading beauty, comedic relief, wise nurturer and plot architect are all prominent types in the musical theatre that portray the middle-aged female character. Each type has unique qualities that allow its respective characters to establish important dynamics with other characters. These relationships provide a full intellectual and emotional dramatic experience for the viewing audience. Certainly some of the roles previously mentioned as part of a particular type actually belong in multiple categories due to various elements of the characters’ make-up. Many middle age female characters develop and change in relation to the events that surround them. In so doing they provide a closer parallel to real middle-aged women’s lives.
CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPING THE “WOMAN OF A CERTAIN AGE”

An adage states every person is a product of his/her genetics and his/her environment; this applies to the middle-aged female character in musical theatre. Musical theatre creators fashioned these characters to reflect the societal standards of the era of their respective shows—their genetics if you will. However, the creators also utilized elements of the world in which they, the creators, lived to become part of the middle-aged female character’s make-up. This influence would equate to the “environment” mentioned in our adage. Societal trends over the past sixty years have heralded progress for women. More importantly for this study, they have yielded greater relevance for female characters, especially the characters in the middle-aged category.

Aunt Eller in Oklahoma!

The musical Oklahoma! opened for Broadway audiences on March 31, 1943, a time when American audiences were hungry for something other than news reports of World War II, or notification of another round of consumer rationing. The show marked the first collaboration between already-established composer Richard Rodgers and well-known lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II. Author Scott Miller aptly assesses the uniqueness of the show in his book Strike Up the Band: A New History of Musical Theatre:

“[the show was able to] . . .take all the innovations, experiments, and surprises that had shown up . . . over the previous twenty years, put them all together in one show, and integrated them seamlessly . . . into the drama of the story. . . . the social issues of Show Boat, the long-form
musical scenes of the Rodgers and Hart movie musical *Love Me Tonight*, the ordinary people of *Porgy and Bess*, a murder over love from *Rose Marie*, the dramatic use of dance in *On Your Toes*, the psychological content of *Lady in the Dark*. . .and a cast of talented unknowns, as in *Babes in Arms*. . .It took all these previous innovations and it made them all work together for the very first time”(51).

The musical depicts the ordinary lives of settlers in the final western frontier, Oklahoma. A young woman, Laurey, must decide if she will accept the advances of a cocky cowboy, Curly, or go to the territory box social with her Aunt Eller’s hired hand, Jud Fry. The story also provides a humorous love triangle between Laurey’s best friend, Ado Annie, and Annie’s two suitors, cowboy Will Parker and peddler Ali Hakim. The settlers must learn to live and work together as farmers and cattle herders to create a new state. These seemingly simple ideas, combined with innovative modern ballet and expertly crafted music, provided 1940’s audiences with an entertaining new form of musical that helped to bury the former decade’s stilted “let’s do a song now” approach to musicals.

What better way for a musical that broke so many molds to begin than by choosing to focus on a middle-aged character? Instead of a chorus of dancing girls, or a rousing introduction of the ingénue members of the cast, *Oklahoma!* begins with the resident matriarchal figure, Aunt Eller, sitting outside her home churning butter. In terms of type, Eller functions primarily as a wise nurturer, although at times she is comedic. However, the size of the role and the respect she is shown by all the show’s characters, with the exception of the villain, allows Eller to exceed the bounds of a typical middle age female character. She advises her niece and all the inhabitants of the surrounding
territory. She is seasoned in the methods of survival on the plains and in life. Some might argue that Aunt Eller should be considered a member of the old maid type, but the script does not provide enough contextual clues to definitively place her in that category.

A common misconception about the character of Aunt Eller is that she is “old”. A 2005 report to Congress by demographic specialist Laura B. Shrestha stated that the eldest average life expectancy between 1900 and 1911 was only 53.2 years for women.

Further, a life lived under the harsh conditions of homesteading on the Great Plains would tend to prematurely age the body, and give a middle age woman what is typically considered to be an older appearance. The resident scholar for the Women’s Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, Margaret Morganroth Gullette, also believes that “in our visual culture women appear to “age” sooner than men”(177) giving audiences another excuse to believe that Aunt Eller is only a wise elder, instead of a vibrant contemporary to many of them.

If Aunt Eller had actually lived in the Oklahoma territory of 1906, would she have been representative of the average middle-aged woman? Aunt Eller is a single woman within the story of Oklahoma!; it is never clearly delineated as to whether she is a widow, never married, or divorced. The real-world version of Aunt Eller could have held any of these stations. Many women, whose husbands passed away while they were homesteading, stayed on the property to be awarded the title for the land upon completion of the homesteading terms. Single women were also allowed to receive either a town lot or 160-acre homestead lot in the Oklahoma territory if they were at least twenty-one years of age. Divorce was also more common in the western territories, bolstered by
shorter waiting periods for official paperwork. Pioneer researchers Linda Peavey and Ursula Smith are quick to point out that:

“Though separation and divorce were increasingly common . . . many women avoided divorce because of the social stigma it still carried, others because it was against their religious beliefs, and still others because divorcing threatened their economic security”(90).

Based on these findings, Eller’s single status was not particularly peculiar for a territory woman.

Eller isn’t a helpless single woman. She runs a farm with the aid of a single hired hand. While records exist that some single female homesteaders did all the farming and housework successfully, other accounts exist in which women recall having to dress like men to be taken seriously for doing “men’s work”. Aunt Eller is held in high regard by the community and has sway over decisions affecting the welfare of her developing town. Did women at the turn-of-the-twentieth century really wield this kind of clout? Elva Ferguson, the wife of the first governor of the Oklahoma territory, did. She was able to use her husband’s position to help affect limited social change, particularly for the Indians, and ran a newspaper and several other businesses from her home.

Oklahoma as the final frontier territory was perhaps one of the only places where a woman could be as independent as Aunt Eller is depicted as being. Linda Williams Reese provides a succinct view of the Oklahoma territory and women’s roles in it in her book *Women of Oklahoma, 1890-1920*:

“Oklahoma constituted a unique frontier that tested the world views of women in many ways. Theories of domestic ideology, forms of racial interaction, acceptable
modes of male and female conduct, negotiation of class status, an accommodation of cultural differences all underwent examination and transformation in an area of the country that struggled into existence as a state while one century gave way to another . . . women, to greater and lesser degrees, redefined their lives in the context of a new multicultural environment” (276).

This statement seems to support the notion that Oklahoma was a haven from the rest of the country’s view of women and their place. However, Reese relates a story earlier in her book in which an ailing pioneer refused to do anything to improve the unsanitary conditions of his shack for his wife or family. When the visiting doctor, who had his wife and her sister assisting him, told the man he and his family would die if he didn’t change their deplorable conditions the pioneer responded, “What was the matter women folks didn’t do what was needed to be done?”(32). Oklahoma may have had some success stories for women, but overall women were not afforded equality with their male counterparts at that time.

So why was Aunt Eller depicted so strongly with character traits that were possessed by a minority of women in the era in which Oklahoma! was set? The answer lies in the influence of the world-at-large that surrounded creators Rodgers and Hammerstein. The United States officially entered World War II on December 8, 1941. With a mandatory draft in place for all men who were of age, the United States was left with a gaping hole in its workforce. The government needed workers to help produce the machinery of war. In 1942, the Lanham Act provided federal funding for childcare facilities so mothers could join the workforce. By early 1943, the U.S. War Production
Commission began a campaign to encourage even more women to fill in the gap left by their male compatriots.

This shift from home to the workplace gave women a freedom and sense of accomplishment they had not previously enjoyed. If the women were to survive the hardships, shortages of consumer goods, and support the troops, they had to become self-reliant. Judy Barrett Litoff quoted war wife, Edith Speert, in her essay “Home Front Americans at War, 1941-45” writing to her army husband:

“I must admit I’m not exactly the same girl you left—I’m twice as independent as I used to be and to top it off, I sometimes think I’ve become ‘hard as nails’ . . . I shall definitely have to work all of my life—I get emotional satisfaction out of working; and I don’t doubt that many a night you will cook the supper while I’m at a meeting . . . I shall never wash and iron—there are laundries for that! Do you think you’ll be able to bear living with me?”(Ed. Heidler 83).

Aunt Eller became a middle-aged embodiment of Rosie the Riveter. Rodgers and Hammerstein saw an opportunity to show audiences a middle-aged woman who reflected a growing number of her female audience counterparts. In essence, they were helping to promote the progress of women by using a figure from another era of great change.

While this approach was innovative and certainly had some impact, its message would be lost in the domestic resurgence of the 1950’s as many women, willingly or unwillingly, gave up their jobs to male veterans. *PM* newspaper columnist Max Lerner predicted this would happen in his February 11, 1943 essay, compiled in the book *Public Journal: Marginal Notes on Wartime America*: 

20
“Certainly there are signs that the medieval court-of-love woman . . . is doomed. Her chief social function was . . . to show off her husband’s or father’s wealth by conspicuous consumption . . . All that seems to be changing. Will it change far? . . . Perhaps, to hold onto their jobs after the war, the women may insist that we abandon the stupidities that doom them to joblessness in non-war economy . . . But this may be hoping too much . . . perhaps all this is but an interlude, and we shall go back . . . to the old condition in which women console us by their beauty and fragility for our own stupid errors in running a world” (21).

Dolly in *Hello, Dolly!*

*Hello, Dolly!* was one of the first shows to greet 1964 Broadway audiences, and opened on January 16th at the St. James Theatre. The show was a musical incarnation of an earlier successful Thornton Wilder play *The Matchmaker*, which itself was based on several previous versions of the story. With music and lyrics by Jerry Herman and a libretto by Michael Stewart, the story was viewed as old-fashioned and even outdated by some. The United States of 1964 was changing rapidly. Americans were still reeling from the Cuban Missile crisis and the recent assassination of President Kennedy. If stories of civil rights sit-ins, the space race, and free love filled the airwaves, how could a show set in 1890’s New York dealing with a matchmaking widow hope to survive?

Not only did the story of Mrs. Dolly Levi- born Gallagher- survive, it thrived, running until the end of the decade for a total of 2,844 performances. The character of Dolly is the centerpiece of this musical about love, adventure and learning what is really important in life. She works her magic to make a match between herself and the Yonkers half-millionaire, Horace Vandergelder. In the meantime she helps Vandergelder’s clerks find love with New York City millineresses, secures Vandergelder’s approval of his
niece’s beau, and re-establishes herself in New York City society, from which she had withdrawn after her first husband’s death. She is a woman on a mission, and the audience identifies with her chutzpah. Her machinations are never malicious. *Hello, Dolly!* provided 1960’s audiences with simple universal themes that helped to promote a sense of steadiness, at least for a few hours, in an era that was filled with unrest.

Dolly serves as the purest embodiment of the plot architect type for the middle-aged female character in musical theatre. Everything that happens in the musical works according to Dolly’s plan, even an arranged match between Vandergelder and another woman. Circumstances that might daunt other characters, namely when the entire cast (including Vandergelder) is arrested for the disturbance caused at the Harmonia Gardens restaurant in Act II, give Dolly an opportunity to prove her usefulness. In this particular circumstance she helps to persuade the judge to exonerate all but Horace. Subsequently, she leaves Horace alone in his jail cell to realize how empty his life will be without her vibrant influence. A true plot architect must capitalize on this kind of self-profiting set-up and Dolly does not disappoint. She arrives in Horace’s store the next day so she can profit from Vandergelder’s realization of his need for her, and, of course, Horace capitulates.

Musicals that feature a plot architect type are often written as star vehicles, or become star vehicles. The type demands so much presence and energy and frequently a corresponding role can be tailored to suit the talents of a particular existing star. David Merrick, the producer of *Hello, Dolly!* intended for the title character to be played by Ethel Merman, a dynamic Broadway veteran. But director Gower Champion and
producer Merrick both agreed after watching a special audition for Carol Channing, an actor Champion had previously directed, that she was Dolly. Dolly would become the primary role of Channing’s career; she appeared in numerous tours and the 1978 and 1995 Broadway revivals (even though she was well beyond middle age by the time of the last revival.)

Other well-known Dollys included Ginger Rogers, Betty Grable, Martha Raye, Phyllis Diller, Mary Martin, Pearl Bailey, Barbara Streisand and, finally, Ethel Merman. When Ms. Rogers starred, the show was re-worked to emphasize her dance ability. For Pearl Bailey a completely Black cast, also headlined by Cab Calloway, was assembled. When Merman finally assumed the role envisioned for her, composer Jerry Herman inserted two songs into the score which he had previously composed solely for Merman. These two songs are not included as part of the standard score anymore. These powerful performers were part of the reason a powerful persona could be embodied on the stage.

Certainly Dolly Levi, like Aunt Eller in Oklahoma!, was partially a product of the era and place in which her show was set, 1890’s New York City. In the show, clues are given that Dolly, if not born Jewish, is Jewish by marriage. This worked to her advantage because Jewish women were traditionally involved in business, both with and without the aid of male relatives. When Dolly married a Jewish man, she did not lose control of any assets she brought into the marriage since: “a wife under Jewish law could own property and make contracts in her own right . . . [she was also] expected to help in the business as needed” (Diner & Binderly 77-78). Dolly’s experience in the business world ultimately helped her make a livelihood after her husband’s death.
Dolly seems to know “everyone” in New York and has a wide circle of influence. These traits were also possibilities for a woman from her era. If she had arrived in America as an Irish immigrant, (Gallagher is traditionally considered an Irish surname), sometime during the period of 1840-1860, her family might have been fleeing the mid-century potato famine in Ireland. Perhaps Dolly grew tired of watching her family struggle to survive in the gang infested Irish ghettos of Lower Manhattan and saw a way out by marrying into a “higher” part of society. She was shrewd and possessed many of the industrious characteristics of Jewish women, which made her appealing to a Jewish man hoping to assimilate more fully into American society. Dolly could not only marry for love, but marry into an ethno-religious sect that actively utilized networking to help one another achieve success in the New World. Jewish immigrants were among the first to help organize labor unions and “bring their philosophy of “share the wealth” to American politics” (Diner A New Promised Land 51).

A further look at Dolly raises the question as to whether Dolly was stronger than a woman of her time would have been. Jews were still a minority culture within the melting pot of 1890’s New York, and American society did not acknowledge women’s rights or abilities. The passage of the nineteenth amendment, giving women the right to vote, was still thirty years away. Jeannette Rankin wouldn’t become the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives until 1916. Women were not encouraged to work, but if they had to pursue employment for a family’s financial security, it was only to be as a teacher or a domestic. All of these facts point to the assertion that Dolly was written to be stronger than a typical woman of her era.
In 1963, Betty Friedan published her now famous book, *The Feminine Mystique*. In it Friedan dispelled the myth that women’s sole and proper domain was the home. She illustrated how consumer forces, psychologists and even educational establishments were suppressing women’s desires and abilities:

“The pervasive ideology of domesticity—her “feminine mystique”—brainwashed women to seek happiness not by developing their talents in the world of work but in subordinating their ambitions in the service of husband and children” (Diner & Binderly 386).

Friedan’s ideas of female empowerment “repudiated mainstream culture” (Fischer & Hout 214). But, the women who had discovered freedom while working in the 1940’s war industries and had been forced to leave it behind in the 1950’s shared Friedan’s sentiments.

As the 1960’s unfolded, it became clear to the American public that the second wave of feminism (the first being the push for women’s right to vote in the early twentieth century) was in full effect. With the tide of social activism turning against many “established” tenets of society, the creators of *Hello, Dolly!* had to have worried that their ‘old-fashioned’ musical might get lost in a sea of turmoil. However, their show already featured a single female heroine. This was a major plus since, as article author Natasha Zaretsky points out, the growing number of feminists considered “the nuclear family, specifically in its postwar incarnation, . . .a linchpin of women’s oppression”(Ed. Gosse & Moser 153). Jerry Herman and Michael Stewart had already worked to write Dolly as a strong and independent character based upon traits of women from her era and somewhat upon the changes that were beginning to occur in the early 1960’s. But
director Gower Champion was the real force behind turning the character Dolly into a model of second wave feminism.

Champion began to gain notoriety as a director at a time when the director’s position was being given more authority in the show’s creation. He brought a sense of movement to his shows which “was all very cinematic . . . there was never any real break in the action” (282) recalled actor Lee Roy Reams in Mark Grant’s book The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical. This approach to directing was best channeled in Hello, Dolly! when he created staging that made Dolly the absolute focus of everything she did within the world of the musical. Now the audiences could see a middle-aged woman making her own decisions, succeeding at numerous chosen professions, refusing to bow to the male establishment, and choosing to marry for reasons other than love.

Now the formerly empowered working women turned housewives could see a new path for themselves in Dolly. More importantly, their daughters who had witnessed their mothers’ “oppression” had a new role model to admire. Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi helped to dissolve the feminine mystique. She was a 1960’s embodiment of woman power delivering her message through the less-threatening time period of the 1890’s.

Arlene in Baby

_Baby_ opened on December 4, 1983 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. This small-cast musical, “managed to sweetly capture in music by David Shire and lyrics by Richard Maltby, Jr. the wild journey of pregnancy for three expectant couples; from conception to birth”(Singer 35-36). Maltby, Shire and book-writer Sybille Pearson created a version of the 1970’s concept musical. Their modified approach utilized a slightly more focused
plot than other conceptual shows like Sondheim’s *Company* or Bennett’s *A Chorus Line*. They also chose to focus on a realistic subject and the way it affected average people. It would become clearer as the 1980’s progressed that the American public’s focus had shifted to the advancement of self. *Baby’s* creators wisely capitalized on this trend by making a musical which promoted self-awareness and dealt with a highly personal topic.

Unlike Aunt Eller and Dolly Levi, the middle-aged woman in *Baby*-Arlene MacNalley- does not fit the other two characters’ previously established mold. Whereas they were written and/or directed to incorporate characteristics of the writer’s/director’s time period, despite their show’s setting in an earlier era, Arlene was created to be a modern-day woman. This necessitates an examination of the character in the context of the historical events which may have defined a real-world version of Arlene, perhaps those of Beth Fowler, the actress who originated the role of Arlene.

Toward the beginning of *Baby*, Arlene is revealed to be forty-three years old. This makes her slightly older than the Baby Boom generation and places her formative years during the 1950’s. Her home environment may have modeled the 1950’s ideal. Her housewife mother likely was dedicated to rearing the family while her father, possibly a veteran able to obtain a post-war college education, brought home the family’s income. In 1955, teenage Arlene may have tuned into the local radio disc jockey spinning the new sounds of Chuck Berry’s Rock ‘n’ Roll music. By 1957, she probably rushed home from her senior year of high school to dance with the regulars on Dick Clark’s *American Bandstand* television program. With television providing a new set of role models, Arlene may have tried to imitate the teenagers on a program like *Father*
Knows Best. Reports of the Cold War and space race with Russia were heard on the news, but probably didn’t have a great impact on the comfortable and conservative lifestyle which Arlene led.

Arlene began college in the late fifties and graduated in the early sixties. She was part of the last generation that considered higher education to be a finishing school for women where one went to secure a husband. She missed the early rumblings of the youth-based social action movements for women, minorities and special interest groups. Married and pregnant soon after completing college, Arlene was too busy rearing a family to realize the total impact of second-wave feminism, the Vietnam War, the hippy drug culture, or the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Rearing three daughters and helping to advance her husband’s career in academia, as indicated by the script, left her little time to realize that the older she grew the less status she would attain. In his book *The Long March: How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960’s Changed America*, author Roger Kimball sheds light on what was occurring while Arlene was imitating the version of adulthood she had seen demonstrated by her mother:

“If America’s cultural revolution was anything, it was an attack on maturity: more, it was a glorification of youth, of immaturity. . .The real victory of the “youth culture” of the Sixties lay not in the fact that its demands were met but in the fact that its values and attitudes were adopted by the culture at large. . .The idealization of youth has resulted not only in the spread of adolescent values and passions: it has also led to the eclipse of adult virtues like circumspection, responsibility and restraint”(9-10).

By the late 1970’s, Arlene had responsibility for guiding three teenage girls toward adulthood. With the country still suffering from 1974’s economic recession,
perhaps Arlene wanted to be more progressive and have her daughters approach their college education as a means to supporting themselves. Traditionally male dominated fields like engineering, business and the sciences were college majors now being promoted for women as an outcome of the feminist desire for equality. Arlene probably made an effort to educate her daughters about their responsibility to the environment, a growing concern in the 1970’s, but also tried to shelter them from reports of terrorist activities abroad and at home (by the Symbionese Liberation Army) while monitoring her girl’s consumption of controversial television programs like *All in the Family* and *Saturday Night Live*. It is likely she wanted her daughters to experience some of the innocence she had growing up in the 1950’s.

By the time Arlene reached 1983, the setting of *Baby*, she had emptied her nest so to speak. She looked forward to the next chapter of her life and having time to focus on her delayed desires. Maybe she would enter the workforce and utilize her college education. While one cannot be certain that Arlene never worked outside the home, it was not as likely for a mother of three at that time. Jean Dresden Grambs points out in her book *Women Over Forty: Visions and Realities*:

“For those mothers who have never worked but who seek employment as their children get older or leave home, venturing into the world of work can be an extremely unsettling and even psychologically devastating experience”(125).

Arlene looked forward to having time alone with her husband. But her unexpected pregnancy only emphasizes the distance between Alan and her, a distance they hardly recognized while rearing children for twenty years. As a product of 1950’s
conservatism, it is difficult for Arlene to give voice to her concerns. Author Stephanie Marston stated this best in her book *If Not Now, When? Reclaiming Ourselves at Midlife*:

> “Despite the fact that many of us questioned the conventional values of the 1950’s and early 1960s and were encouraged to go beyond “traditional feminine roles,” countless women were still reluctant to permit themselves to throw off these constraints. Many of us were taught to “be nice,” “be selfless”, “be pretty,” “be loving,” “be supportive”- you get the idea” (150).

Although abortion was made legal by the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, it is a difficult option for Arlene to consider. The fact that she does consider abortion proves how desperately Arlene needs a different and more fulfilling path in life.

Arlene also longs for understanding from her spouse Alan. Throughout the course of the show she wonders if their marriage can still work. Many modern women decided they could not reconcile their marital or relationship differences. Author Jean Dresden Grambs referenced a 1983 study by G.M. Barrow which reported that twenty-five percent of American women between the ages of 35-64 (the extended range of middle age) identified themselves as single, divorced or widowed. Did Arlene need to embrace motherhood again at age forty-three? Older mothers were only starting to become the standard in the early eighties. Could she negotiate an authentic self while renegotiating her former stereotypes of wife and mother? The creators of *Baby* decided that she could and would by showing Arlene making decisions to rekindle her marriage and have another child. The world at large’s influence was reflected in these decisions which were in line with the conservative past of the 1950’s and the conservative 1980’s
ushered in by the Reagan administration. Arlene had not been a member of the “radical” sect of society in her youth and would not become a member of it at middle age.

**Arlene in *Baby* - 2006 Version**

In the twenty-four years since *Baby* premiered on Broadway, American society has continued to develop and change. The Department of Labor reported that during the year 2006 sixty-seven million American women were part of the workforce with seventy-five percent of that number working full-time and the other twenty-five percent employed only part-time. Women’s Studies is now a flourishing field in higher education with over 400 programs at universities throughout the United States according to the Artemis Guide to Women’s Studies website (consulted in May of 2007). So many opportunities provide today’s woman with more control over her destiny than any previous generation. Thus, one may ask, do these changes impact the portrayal of the role of Arlene in a script and score which have not been altered from the 1983 original version?

While critics chastised *Baby* for failing to fully develop its characters and storylines, this shortcoming is actually helpful for the character of Arlene. Limited stage time and even more limited dialogue development allowed the characters of Arlene and Alan to translate more readily to an updated setting for the show. This couple’s interactions utilize a sense of maturity that is still accessible to an adult audience two decades later. Unlike some of the younger characters in the show, Arlene does not make significant references to her era or the events thereof, another positive for re-envisioning the musical.
The character of Arlene in 2006 could be analyzed in a similar way as the previous section followed the development of the 1983 Arlene. Since the script for Baby was not changed, however, Arlene could not be re-written to completely reflect her times as a modern middle-aged woman. She could only be changed by the actor’s approach to the character based on important societal developments from 1983 to 2006.

The middle-aged woman in 2006 matured during a time when many women were actively pursuing their rights for equality. Author John Ehrman felt the revolutions of the 1960’s and the 1970’s came to fruition in the 1980’s. During the eighties the American public acknowledged the rights of the individual and, “Americans in general were less willing to judge one another than they had been a generation earlier . . . [with] rising tolerance cut[ting] across all class, educational and occupational boundaries” (175). Perhaps these changing attitudes empowered the 2006 version of Arlene to view abortion as a less stigmatized, more viable option in light of her age and family circumstances.

These shifts also implied that women had the ability to pursue virtually any career they wanted. The 1980’s saw the appointment of Sandra Day O’Connor as the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court. Dr. Sally Ride became the first American woman in space, and Geraldine Ferraro became the first female vice-presidential candidate.

As the eighties turned into the 1990’s, some women succeeded as CEOs, business executives, and in other high-level positions. Statistics show that the average woman’s earning power has never equaled that of men’s. Furthermore, many qualified women have not been able to achieve the ranks of their equally or less-qualified male counterparts due to the Glass Ceiling. The Glass Ceiling effectively allowed women to
see the positions at the top while the male network in power worked to keep them out. In 1996, the Federal Government finally recognized the Glass Ceiling for the destructive discriminatory practice it is and formed the Glass Ceiling Commission. The commission’s duty was to evaluate what law-making bodies could do to prevent further discrimination against women in the workplace.

These issues of women at work are particularly significant for the 2006 version of Arlene. Since she had three daughters in quick succession, she may not have been a full-time worker. Demands on the modern family’s income including, but not limited to, inflation, increased consumer consumption by the middle class, and rising college costs almost certainly meant that Arlene worked part-time. Arlene may have been a victim of the Glass Ceiling being told she could not receive merit bonuses or promotions at work because she was not “dedicated enough” and “her priorities were not in order”. Some more progressive employers now offer options to accommodate the complexities of daily life. These options include flextime-allowing employees to set their own schedule within given parameters, telecommuting-performing their duties from a home office (40% of IBM’s workforce has no office according to a 2005 Business Week article), and job-sharing. Susan Berfield’s Business Week article “Two for the Cubicle” elaborates on the growing popularity of job-sharing:

“No one has an estimate of how many workers share jobs nowadays. But as companies try to retain talented women (and men) with young families as well as those baby boomers who want more time to themselves, the number that offer job shares is rising. The 2005 National Study of Employers by the Families and Work Institute found that
44% of businesses allow some employees to share jobs” (Berfield 88).

Many businesses have yet to adopt these flexible policies and Arlene may be in a field that does not readily utilize them, such as academia.

If she were in academia, as this author envisioned her for the purposes of rehearsal backstory, she could not move into a tenure track position due to her time in the home and away from the classroom. It is essential to keep these factors in mind as the 2006 Arlene considers her life in her forties. Today many middle-aged women are attaining their highest levels of prestige and pay at mid-life. Perhaps Arlene wanted to pursue a higher level work position and join her middle-aged peers. Since flexible work policies have only become available within more recent years, she may feel her commitment to family has placed her at a disadvantage for most of her marriage. Now as an older worker, already lower on the work status ladder, another pregnancy can only further jeopardize her deferred career aspirations.

Over the past twenty years the changing options for women in the workplace have also caused a shift in their own priorities. Many more women are choosing to begin their careers first and defer child-rearing until after they are established within their field. This is helping the average age of first time mothers to increase, while contributing to decreasing fertility rates for the average woman. According to a 1993 United Nations study quoted by Carol Jenkins in her article “Women, work and caregiving: how do these roles affect women’s well-being?” in the *Journal of Women and Aging*, “they [fertility rates] are projected to continue decreasing until they are below 2 by the early 21st century”(28). The choice to delay a family in favor of career is not necessarily an easy
one as doctors and authors Michele C. Moore, M.D. and Caroline M. deCosta, M.D. illustrate:

“As an older person, you have the experience and maturity to come up with good solutions for yourself. As older mothers and professionals ourselves, we can tell you that no matter what choices you make, you will feel conflicted. Sometimes you will be giving your best to the child and sometimes it will go to the job; rarely will you feel that you have fulfilled both roles ideally. This is one of the most difficult aspects of being a working older mother” (135).

Twenty-first century American women have the benefit of the Family and Medical Leave Act passed by Congress in 1993. Unlike previous generations, this law gives modern women greater freedom in how they structure the balance between family and career. According to the U.S Department of Labor, “covered employers must grant an eligible employee up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12 month period for any one of the following reasons: for the birth and care of the newborn child of the employee. . .” (http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/ 1). The changing view of the “appropriate time for motherhood” has made the concept of becoming pregnant at forty-three less shocking to 2006 audiences, and to the character of Arlene, although an unplanned pregnancy can be shocking at any age. Arlene could rely on new provisions in the business world for time away to devote to parenting. She may want, however, to invest herself full-time in her profession without the responsibility of child-rearing. Arlene may also simply want to do what the contemporary books for women at mid-life suggest and discover her authentic self, a self that may no longer include motherhood as a high priority.
One final consideration for the 2006 version of the show does not have as much to do with Baby’s individual characters as it does with its concept. A major shift in the entertainment world has occurred since the early 1990’s with the debut of The Real World, a television show that chronicles the everyday lives of seven strangers “forced” to live in some sort of mansion often in an exotic locale. The show’s seventeenth season was filmed in Key West, Florida. The concept of watching real people was not exactly new; game shows and documentary series had been doing it since the advent of television in the 1950’s. However this new “reality” format quickly evolved into an edited and somewhat scripted version of reality. In shows like Road Rules and Big Brother strangers fought, lived and worked together. Competition shows like Survivor, The Amazing Race, The Bachelor, and The Apprentice showcase contestants vying for various monetary, romantic or career rewards. Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Trading Spaces, and The Biggest Loser provide average people the chance to improve themselves or their surroundings with the help of various experts. Programs like Newlyweds and Dancing with the Stars gave celebrities the chance to prove they were “just like everyone else” by bringing camera crews into their homes, or by competing for notoriety outside their area of expertise.

What does this trend have to do with Baby? To some extent all facets of the professional entertainment industry have suffered due to the public’s desire to watch “themselves” in their own homes instead of helping support trained actors on screen and stage. According to the 2005 Member Referendum published by the Screen Actor’s Guild, five out of the top ten programs in the 2003-2004 television season were reality
shows. Ticket sales for Broadway shows went from 11.89 million during the 2000-2001 season, down to 10.95 million in the '01-'02 season and back up to only 11.42 million during the '02-03 season, according to a statistical analysis done by The League of American Theatres and Producers, Inc.

Yet, Baby has the advantage of appealing to modern audiences hungry for realistic topics highlighted in a more structured format. Updating the setting to 2006 gave the audience the benefit of watching people who were like them dealing with a topic, pregnancy, which many of them have experienced. The 2006 Baby also presents Arlene and Alan as representatives of a major section of the audience, who having achieved a certain financial status in middle age, have the means to attend live theatre. These same audience members are eager to see their demographic represented since it is frequently absent from the reality shows flooding television programming.

Based upon the concept of type, covered in chapter two of this document, how would Arlene be categorized? Having reared three children and preparing to raise a fourth, she could certainly be considered a wise nurturer. Her theoretical experiences in balancing work expectations with her choice to have a family at a young age might qualify her as an experienced worldly woman. Certainly as she ages and is concerned with her appearance, as evidenced by her desire to work out at the beginning of the show, she could easily be classified as a fading beauty. To apply only one of these types to this complex character would be overly simplistic.

Since Arlene is a multi-dimensional character, it is this author’s contention that she represents a new type for middle-aged female characters in musical theatre, one who
developed primarily in the last two to three decades. This type seeks to re-negotiate the world in her own terms, terms that are in sync with how her society and her experiences have shaped her. Arlene is seeking self-actualization. Self-actualization is considered by most to be at the top of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Simons, Irwin and Drinnien summarize Maslow’s theory of self actualization in their book *Psychology-The Search for Understanding*:

“... self actualization [is] a person’s need to be and do that which the person was “born to do”. “A musician must make music, an artist must paint, and a poet must write.” These needs make themselves felt in signs of restlessness. The person feels on edge, tense, lacking something, in short restless. . .It is not always clear what a person wants when there is a need for self-actualization” (n. pag.).

Arlene must find what she was born to do. Subsequently her struggles to make, accept, or celebrate life choices during the course of the musical *Baby* make her character one of the first self-actualizing middle-aged female roles. *Baby* may not have changed in twenty-four years, but the background and approach for the character of Arlene certainly have. As long as the socio-economic and entertainment changes that have made an impact on society are considered, and included, in an updated production of the musical, the role of Arlene can continue to function as a strong, modern woman.

**Conclusion**

Arlene, Dolly and Aunt Eller are excellent examples of how characters can be strong reflections of real-world counterparts. They also demonstrate the importance of middle-aged female characters not only to the plot of musicals, but to the lives and
development of other characters within the musical. The relative success of each character’s vehicle musical also bodes well for future development of similarly distinct middle-aged female characters. Perhaps their greatest significance lies in providing audiences with a celebration of vibrant middle age. These portrayals of middle age defy the notions of decline in worth, status, ability and significance that are all too prevalent in our youth driven American entertainment industry.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF BABY

Whether a musical will become a success is determined partly at its inception. If the musical has a collaborative team with notable careers, it may be perceived more favorably than a show crafted by newcomers. The musical’s legacy continues to be shaped by its production history and critical successes or failures. However, one of the most important factors in whether a show maintains a positive sense of longevity lies in its construction. Does it present timeless themes or issues relevant only to the time of its creation? Are there characters with whom the audience can identify? All of these factors and questions may be considered further through an analysis of the musical Baby.

Musical Collaborators

Richard Maltby, Jr.

A three-person collaborative team worked together to craft the musical Baby. Yale graduate Richard Maltby, Jr. is not only an accomplished lyricist, but also a director, librettist, and producer. His association with David Shire began in 1977 with the successful Off-Broadway revue Starting Here, Starting Now. Maltby’s directorial and lyric writing debuts on Broadway came in 1978 with Ain’t Misbehavin’, a show he helped to conceive. His freshman effort was rewarded with the 1978 Tony award for best director. Other successful directorial projects include co-directing the Broadway version of Song and Dance, Baby, numerous shows for the Philadelphia Drama Guild, and the Manhattan Theatre Club. His partnership with Shire created not only Baby, but also
another successful revue in 1989 entitled *Closer Than Ever*, and the translation from
screen to stage of the 1988 Tom Hanks movie *Big*. Maltby was also a lyricist for *Miss
Saigon, Nick and Nora*, and lyricist/librettist for *The Pirate Queen*.

David Shire

David Shire, another Yale graduate, utilizes his compositional talents in a number
of ways. When not writing music for Tony nominated scores like *Baby* and widely-
produced reviews like *Starting Here, Starting Now*, he is busy composing for film,
television and non-musical drama. Shire won an Academy award for his song “It Goes
Like It Goes” from the film *Norma Rae*. His music for various television series have
garnered him four Emmy nominations. Shire’s awards also include two Grammys for his
work on the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack. His music has been recorded on many
artists’ individual albums including those of Barbra Streisand, Maureen McGovern, and
opera singer Kiri Te Kanawa.

Sybille Pearson

Sybille Pearson, the third collaborator, received a Tony nomination for her book
for *Baby*, her first and only collaboration with Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire.
Some of her playwriting credits include *Watching the Dog, Phantasie*, and her play
*Unfinished Stories*, which was published in *American Theatre* magazine. Pearson has
been the recipient of numerous writing awards and fellowships including the Rockefeller
Playwrights Fellowship. She is also a founding member of a group for women writers,
sponsored by the Classic Stage Company, called “Sitting In A Room”. An active
member of the Dramatists Guild, she also serves as a panelist for the O’Neill Musical Theatre Conference. Ms. Pearson is the resident book-writer/playwright for the graduate musical theatre writing faculty of the New York University Tisch School of the Arts.

**Productions**

*Baby* opened on Broadway at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre December 4, 1983 and ran for a total of 241 performances. It garnered seven Tony nominations, including best musical, and six Drama Desk nominations, two of which it won. Despite this seemingly critical success, musical theatre writer Ethan Mordden contends in his book *The Happiest Corpse I’ve Ever Seen*, that *Baby*, “gave Maltby and Shire nothing to work with but six dreary people” (112). As of 2007, the musical has not been revived on Broadway. The show did receive a significant production at the Papermill Playhouse in 2004, where it featured a more ethnically diverse cast than the 1983 original and a revised script by the original book-writer, Sybille Pearson. *Baby* is also produced frequently by university, regional, summer stock and dinner theatres. Upcoming productions are listed on the Music Theatre International Show website, the licensing agency for the production.

**Critical Reviews**

Despite its seven Tony nominations, *Baby* had a mixed reception with critics. *New York Times* reviewer Frank Rich found the music and lyrics mostly solid, but considered the book lacking at best. Liz Callaway, who played Lizzie, was given the most glowing review of the show’s actors, with the rest of the principles (except for
Alan) receiving decent kudos for their work. Rich’s opinion of the show is best summarized by his statement:

“At a time when nearly every Broadway musical, good and bad, aims for the big kill with gargantuan pyrotechnics, here is a modestly scaled entertainment that woos us with such basic commodities as warm feelings, an exuberant cast and a lovely score. Perfect “Baby” is not, but it often makes up in buoyancy and charm what it lacks in forceful forward drive” (C13).

John Beaufort of *The Christian Science Monitor* felt the show was a “curiosity” (33), and praised its energy while chiding its few, but cumbersome, technical elements. Even the show’s producer, James Freydberg, admitted in a *New York Times* article by Samuel Freedman that reviews calling the show, “‘intelligent’, ‘endearing’ . . . aren’t money adjectives” (C13). *Baby* did not come to “full term” on Broadway, running only eight months and failing to win any of its Tony nominations.

The revised 2004 production at Papermill Playhouse was more enthusiastically received. The original creative team contributed a new song entitled “End of Summer” for the three principle women and the book was slightly revamped. John Kenrick of *Musicals101.com* reviewed the show praising its faithfulness to the spirit of the original while fixing the staging and technical errors of the Broadway version. Kenrick also felt the cast, headlined by Broadway veterans Norm Lewis, La Chanze, Carolee Carmello, Michael Rupert, Moeisha McGill, and Chad Kimball, “will delight anyone who knows and loves this show—and will easily blow away anyone hearing the score for the first time”(2). This revised version may eventually bring a second Broadway life for this
show which has primarily existed in the regional and educational domain since the close of its original run.

**Structural Analysis**

Baby’s 1983 debut helped to usher in the age of the “reality musical”. This does not mean that *Baby* contains no fantastical elements or spectacle, but rather that its subject matter is focused upon people’s reactions to a realistic situation. Musicals prior to *Baby* tended to treat pregnancy with a sense of happy anticipation, as did the character Agnes in Schmidt and Jones 1966 two-person musical *I Do! I Do!*, or as a fortuitous act of patriotism by the character Mary Turner in Gershwin’s 1931 *Of Thee I Sing*. Unlike those shows, *Baby* presented pregnancy as an antagonist for the musical’s three principle couples. Although the subject matter alone would have been enough to secure *Baby* a place in the annals of musical theatre history, the show provides another notable hook. *Baby* deals with serious social issues such as abortion and living together without being married. These issues were somewhat risky for inclusion in a musical comedy in 1983 and are still debated topics today. *Baby* made strong statements that were able to resonate with the audiences of the time, while still entertaining them.

**Inciting Incident**

Conception is the inciting incident for the musical *Baby* and for many of the problems its characters encounter throughout the course of the show. While conceiving a child is the ultimate goal for the couple in their thirties struggling with fertility problems, it is an accident for the show’s college-age couple and a completely unexpected event for
the middle-aged couple looking forward to having an empty nest. Appendix A presents a spreadsheet analysis of the plot, characters and function of each scene and song within *Baby*. Many of the challenges, discoveries, climaxes and resolutions for the three primary couples are detailed in the spreadsheet along with some insight into each character’s subtext.

**Character Descriptions**

Directors sometimes create a character breakdown sheet to help them better understand their primary characters. A breakdown’s purpose is to briefly summarize the qualities that are expressly written into each character, as well as qualities not specifically designated but which the director would like his/her actors to focus upon. The following character breakdown is based upon this author’s perceptions of each character both from analysis of the script and observations during the rehearsal and performance processes.

**Lizzie Fields**

Twenty-year old college junior. Full of dreams and hopes for the future. Favors non-traditional values. A bit dependent at the beginning of the show; she makes a transition to a strong sense of independence and self-reliance by the end of the show. In love with Danny. Pregnant throughout the show.

**Danny Hooper**

Twenty-year old college junior. Musician. Trying to throw off his traditional upbringing by changing majors and moving in with his girlfriend. Naïve, but tries to hide it. Needs guidance from others to make decisions. In love with Lizzie.
Arlene MacNalley

Forty-three-year old mother of three grown children. Possibly a part-time career woman. Family has been major life focus. Suppresses her own desires in order to please others. Beginning to discover different wants and desires at mid-life that conflict with this tendency. Married to Alan. Pregnant throughout the show.

Alan MacNalley

Forty-eight-year old father of three grown children. Works in administration at the college where the show is set. Placed career above all else. Generally happy individual, but not sure of who he has become over the years. Wants to be a father again. Married to Arlene.

Pam Sakarian

Thirty-something-year old women’s college basketball coach. Struggles with a lot of insecurities about her feminine qualities. Questions her desire for a child when it begins to break apart her marriage. Discovers her inner strength by end of the show. Married to Nick.

Nick Sakarian

Thirty-something-year old men’s college track coach. Uses humor to cover up his feelings of inadequacy. Having problems with fertility. Stubborn. Refuses to accept Pam’s help initially, learns to let his guard down by the end of the show. Married to Pam.
Doctor

Appears only in Act One, Scene Eight. Bumbling. Tries to be tactful but usually fails. Has a severe problem with his new contact lenses. Comedic character.

Professor Weiss and Dean Webber

These characters only appear in Act One, Scene Nine. Both men bemoan the pains of fatherhood, but secretly love their roles. Weiss and Webber are faculty members at the college.

Mr./Ms. Hart

Realtor in Act One, Scene Ten who comes to list Arlene and Alan’s home. Politey condescending, persistent. Pushes Arlene’s buttons.

Ensemble- Students, “Ladies”, Nurses, Narrators

As students, ensemble must keep in mind appropriate emotions based on the time of the school year. “Ladies” each have an extreme character defined by their lines in the song “The Ladies Singing Their Song”. Each one of these women loves being a mother and is a bit too eager to pass on her respective knowledge to Lizzie. Nurses should be a gentle presence to help calm the various pregnant women. Narrator provides beginning narration only- possesses a soothing voice with an air of anticipation.

Themes

The major themes of Baby include the expectation of new life, acknowledging and overcoming differences in a relationship, self-doubt, lost time and the maturation
process. Each of these themes helps to clarify the dramatic structure and arc of the musical and further expound on the analysis from Appendix A. Many of the themes also provide insight into the six main characters and their relationships with one another.

Throughout the show each of the two couples expecting a child deals with the various joys and fears that accompany the nine-month gestation period. Alan and Arlene, the eldest couple, know what to expect, having had three children previously, but wonder if they will be able to or want to handle those responsibilities at middle age. For the youngest couple, Danny and Lizzie, every feeling or worry is a new one. Nick and Pam, the middle couple, eventually discover they have not successfully conceived so their joy turns into a somewhat destructive obsession with conception.

Acknowledging and overcoming differences in a relationship is a theme that is highlighted by the couples’ reactions to their expectation of new life. Danny and Lizzie discover that they hold fundamentally different opinions on marriage. Alan and Arlene slowly discover that they have been on automatic pilot for much of their marriage and aren’t in touch with each other’s needs anymore. When Nick and Pam visit the fertility doctor in Act One Scene Eight, Nick is devastated that he is the one with a fertility problem and addresses their efforts at conception like a competitive event he must win. Each person’s beliefs are challenged, some almost to the breaking point. In the end some measure of resolution is reached by each couple. Danny agrees not to force Lizzie into marriage, and she comes to the decision on her own that she would like to marry Danny. Alan and Arlene admit they have focused on their family first and need to begin to care for one another to continue as husband and wife as well as parents. Nick and Pam realize
that having a baby isn’t everything, and just having one another can be fulfilling for the
time being.

The best example of self doubt as a major theme is uncovered by analyzing the
character Pam. While self-doubt motivates most of Baby’s characters at some point, Pam
is especially susceptible to this emotion due to her concern that her athletic nature may
outweigh her feminine qualities. Pam wants to make up for not being very domestic by
having a baby. When she thinks she is pregnant, she begins to wonder if she can handle
being a mother. Nick believes that she can be an excellent mother and acts as a source of
reassurance to her.

When this couple discovers that they have not successfully conceived, Nick
becomes obsessed with trying to follow the exacting conception techniques stipulated by
the doctor. As they proceed with a challenging regimen, Nick loses sight of his wife’s
desires and concerns. This oversight on Nick’s part fuels Pam’s sense of self-doubt.
Eventually, she does assert herself when her frustration at being ignored by her husband
comes to a boiling point. Subsequently, Pam tells Nick their efforts at conception have
become mechanical and are negatively affecting their marriage. Ultimately, her former
sense of self-doubt is replaced with a sense of acceptance of who she is, what she wants,
and how she and her husband can succeed in their marriage.

A theme with which many people identify is that of “lost time”. This particular
theme is most evident in the lives of the eldest couple, Alan and Arlene. Although they
have been married for twenty years, they spent most of the time caring for their children
and deferring their own needs or wants. Arlene wants their “empty nest” time to focus on
the two of them, and Alan is scared to be alone with Arlene. Both people are not sure they remember how to act around each other, and the imminent approach of another baby may rob them of the chance to find out. They have already lost so much time to really “live,” and mourn their loss in the song “And What If We Had Loved Like That?”.

Each of the couples in Baby matures in a different way, but the couple for whom maturation is most readily identifiable as a major theme is Lizzie and Danny. They start the show as college kids having “a trip” living together and “playing house”. However, Lizzie’s pregnancy makes them realize they are making adult decisions that have consequences. Danny learns the importance of providing for his family when he accepts a position with a touring punk band which takes him on the road for three months. Lizzie develops more self-sufficiency during his absence by working to decorate their home and taking good care of herself. Together they make decisions about “traditional” roles and create a life for themselves that will balance school, work, child, and most importantly, one another.

Tone

Baby presents readily identifiable themes and also portrays realistic situations within the context of a musical. To achieve the intended more modern, straight-forward approach Baby aims to achieve, the overall tone of the musical is an important consideration. Baby does not use the formal dialogue of a Shakespearean drama nor the proper manners of a Shaw comedy; it uses language contemporary to 1983. However, its approach could not be classified as completely casual. At no point does a principal character really break the fourth wall. The ensemble acts as a sort of Greek chorus.
commenting on the passage of time. They interact with one another and the audience
during their four “Transition” songs.

Each of the three principal couples utilizes various tones of formality and
familiarity. Alan and Arlene as the eldest, and likely the most educated, communicate
more cerebrally with one another and do not utilize much vernacular language. One
example of this type of exchange takes place in Act One, Scene Ten where Arlene tells
Alan about her desires for a life that is free from child care:

ARLENE. When I weigh what I want against a child, it
seems so trivial. I want a little apartment for two. I want
to decorate it with something that isn’t washable . . .
We’ve always been three, four, five. We didn’t have
much chance to be two.

ALAN. And that’s what you want?

ARLENE. Only if you want it.

ALAN. I’ll take care of everything. The main thing for
both of us is not to look at this emotionally. I can speak
to the Director of Student Health about finding a doctor. . But for tonight I think the best thing to do is get some
rest. (45)
Lizzie and Danny are much more casual with one another and often express themselves through physical actions driven by their intense emotions. They are both quite comfortable with using slang in their communication with one another. An example from Act One, Scene Seven:

DANNY. All right, but if we’re not getting married, I’m taking this gig with the Magnets.

LIZZIE. But you hate the Magnets, they’re. . .

BOTH. . . spastic, punk, rip-off’s. (29-30)

Nick and Pam show the greatest blend of the two extremes in tone. They are still connected to one another emotionally, which lends an air of casualness to their relationship. However, their tendency to make references in everyday speech to a slightly outdated body of popular culture, and their subscription to a more traditional way of thinking, gives them an air of formality. A good example of this occurs in the doctor’s office scene where the doctor has just asked about the couple’s sex-life:

NICK. (á la Groucho Marx) Fine, Doctor, how’s yours?

PAM. Ours is terrific.

DOCTOR. Good. Because what you’ve got ahead of you can be the test of a good marriage. But, I have found that couples with a sense of humor. . .
PAM.  (positively) That’s the one thing Nick’s got.

NICK.  (à la Gleason) Bang. Zoom! (36)

The tonal range developed through the different characters in Baby helps to create an environment where realistic issues can be realized in a musical context. With this groundwork laid, the audience is free to identify with the set of characters whose communication style and tone is most recognizable to them.

Conflict

Successful drama contains a conflict, or several conflicts, with which its characters must grapple. The primary conflict for each couple in Baby is slightly different but is focused by the same inciting incident for all three couples—the conception or lack of conception of a baby. Alan and Arlene MacNalley must come to terms with the people they have become during the last twenty years. Further, they must decide if they can accept each other as those new people while still becoming parents and risking loss of their new self-awareness. Nick and Pam Sakarian must decide if trying to have a baby is worth reducing their marriage to a constant reproduction regimen with no regard to any other aspect of their relationship. Danny Hooper and Lizzie Fields have to decide whether having a baby is crucial at this point in their lives, and, once they decide to keep the baby, if they will be able to create a lasting relationship together with this new and time-consuming burden. As such, an over-arching theme for Baby’s conflict seems to be the struggles of developing and maintaining a relationship.
Although one could consider the anticipation of Lizzie’s and Arlene’s babies as the primary dramatic event of the story, it does not seem to be the primary focus. *Baby* contains many small dramatic builds that result in important climactic moments. This is due in part to having three principal couples rather than clearly delineated leading, secondary, and supporting characters.

An example of rising action within the piece occurs during Act One, Scene Ten, when Arlene discusses with Alan her vision of their future as a couple, which does not include having a baby. This is the first time she has openly considered an abortion. Alan’s response indicates his need to appear in control of the situation, although his subtext clearly proves that he is not. This particular scene is not the pinnacle of the relationship between Alan and Arlene, merely part of the larger journey they take during the course of the show. More examples of rising action can be referenced as mentioned previously in Appendix A.

Climaxes and Conclusions

Each couple has several instances of rising action resulting in climactic moments. One such build for Lizzie and Danny is their fight over getting married, which finally climaxes in the middle of the second act when they decide they will try marriage. Pam and Nick’s most obvious build is their continuing struggle to have a baby. The audience may hope that this will be resolved with their successful conception, but it climaxes in the realization that their relationship is more important than slaving over conception.

Arlene questions whether she and Alan should go through with their pregnancy. The aforementioned Act One, Scene Ten, shows Alan supporting Arlene’s doubts by
agreeing to help arrange an abortion. However, Alan’s agreement to an abortion is not the ultimate climax for this issue. The ultimate climax, in this particular instance, occurs during Act One, Scene Eleven. In this scene, the realtor, Ms. Hart, who has been contacted to put the MacNalley home on the market, makes disparaging remarks about the property. Arlene views each remark as an attack on the home she has created over the past twenty years. She becomes so frustrated with the realtor and with her husband’s seeming inability to defend their home that she must do something drastic to rid herself of the realtor. She decides the only way to do that is pretend to tell her husband for the first time that she is pregnant and that they’ll need the house, instead of a condominium, to have enough room for the baby. Arlene successfully escorts the realtor out and decides to reverse her decision from the previous scene about terminating her pregnancy.

The denouement occurs as each couple finds some sort of resolution as individuals and as a couple. For Lizzie and Danny it begins in the song “Two People in Love” when they sing of their love and commitment to each other and ends with the birth of their child, which underscores their decisions. Pam and Nick decide in the last scene of Act 2 that they will continue trying to have a baby in their own way, and will go to the hospital to help welcome Lizzie and Danny’s child. Alan and Arlene begin their denouement at the end of the song “And What If We Had Loved Like That?” when they sing, “And what if we could love like that?”, which lets each of them know they still care for one another and want to continue their relationship. In the final scene they simply enjoy being together and thinking about how they will proceed, this time as husband and wife first and parents second.
Analysis Summary

Despite the presence of socially important themes and a common natural occurrence, Baby is a period piece. There are many cultural references and vernacular terms which place the action in the early 1980’s. One such reference is introduced when the character Nick is prompted (by a direction in the script) to do a Jackie Gleason-as-Ralph Kramden impression. The Honeymooners, the television program in which the character Ralph Kramden originated, aired from only 1955-56, although it appeared in sketch versions during most of the 1960’s. It is clear that Nick is referencing something from his childhood, a cultural phenomenon that is not as well known by more contemporary younger audiences. Much of the score bears the influences of the post punk-electronic pop genre of music popular in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, particularly numbers like “We Start Today” and “Fatherhood Blues.”

It is the usage of common-life themes and ordinary people that gives Baby its timeless qualities. The presence of three sets of primary characters at different points in their lives is an element to which many adult audiences can relate. Whether the spectator is a college student or a retired professional, s/he can find something about the situations depicted in Baby to which s/he can relate.

Baby’s script provides ample room for exploration of dramatic crafting as well as the human condition. The script, by Sybille Pearson, does contain positive elements in its general thematic presentation but also features dated references and a failure to fully develop certain primary characters. Noted musical theatre researcher Gerald Bordman went so far as to write “This determinedly intimate musical had no real plot. . .” (773).
The score does a better job with these tasks and helps to compensate for some of the script’s perceived shortcomings. However, Baby is more enjoyable when viewed as a full-scale production. It is in this format that the rough spots in the show’s construction can be smoothed by incorporating subtle nuances from both the director and actors. When done well, it is a touching and effective piece of theatre.
CHAPTER FIVE: ACTOR’S JOURNALS

Rehearsal Journal

Wednesday, August 23, 2006: The evening began with our director Nicholas Wuehrmann providing an overview of the rehearsal process and show concept. I appreciate the fact that we will be observing an Equity break schedule for our entire rehearsal process. Nick is requesting that as we progress through the next several weeks, our goal should be to be off book by the second time the scene is worked in a rehearsal. Debbie Tedrick, our vocal director, gave us an introduction to her ideas for the rehearsal process as well. The major elements we need to consider are how our particular interpretations can change the somewhat dated feeling of Baby. We also need to be aware of times when reinterpreting rhythms would destroy the artistic integrity of Richard Maltby and David Shire’s (the lyricist and composer) work.

I have had some thoughts about a few of the lyrics with which I have a personal issue, namely taking the Lord’s name in vain. I feel that even though a character does not define an actor as a person, it is a reflection of that person because actors must put so much of themselves into every character. From a creative standpoint, the particular lyrics in question are not consistent with Arlene’s character in the rest of the script or score; they are much more consistent with Pam or Nick. I also feel that the emotional stakes are not high enough to require the use of what I consider to be profanity at the points at which the questionable lyrics occur, especially the one at the beginning of “The Plaza
Song”. I need to discuss some alternatives with Nick to see if he would be open to changing them slightly.

We began the evening by working on the song “We Start Today”. Arlene and Alan have a section where they trade off singing about their different visions of their future. Is Arlene really perturbed at Alan at this point, or are they even hearing one another? I did decide that Arlene’s initial reaction to her pregnancy, which is discovered at the end of the song, is disbelief not shock. Shock should be reserved for the youngest couple. Throughout the show, Arlene’s opinion of her pregnancy will fluctuate. Early on she is decidedly resistant to the idea of bearing and rearing another child. This can be most readily observed in the score where Arlene’s rhythms are written very precisely and should be performed this way by the actor. I need to use my own time for further practice on several sections of this song to be sufficiently prepared for our next rehearsal.

During the song “Baby, Baby, Baby”, I need to focus on Arlene’s emotional state. She may be remembering the excitement of her first child, but the song takes her on a journey where she is left questioning her ability to relive this experience a fourth time. By the time we rehearsed “I Want It All”, I felt that I was straining vocally and had lost my sense of my character’s unique voice. This will probably be a struggle for me because I am having a hard time equating a “43 year old voice” with my “belting” voice. Hopefully, my being better rested will help with this problem. During Friday’s rehearsal we will work through all of the Alan/Arlene music.

*Friday, August 25, 2006:* Before rehearsal tonight I sent an e-mail to Nick about my concerns with the lyrics mentioned in my last entry. I cited both religious reasons for
not wanting to say them, as well as the reasons I covered in my last entry. Although Nick
had not formulated his response by the time I arrived at rehearsal, he did tell me to omit
the lyrics in question until such time as he could figure out a suitable response to my
query. As my fellow cast mates rehearsed their songs tonight, I took the time to jot down
some backstory for Arlene. These backstory notes take into consideration that our
production of Baby is being set in 2006, not its original time period of 1983.

Arlene Turner met Alan MacNalley at Brown University in 1984. It was the
spring of her senior year, and Alan was serving as the graduate teaching assistant for her
honors seminar. Alan was taken with her quick wit, top-notch work, and beauty; but, due
to university policy, he couldn’t ask her to go on a date with him while she was a student.
However, on graduation day Alan sought out Arlene to ask her for a date. She was dating
someone else at the time, but was impressed with Alan’s forthrightness. By the spring of
1985, she had broken up with her previously mentioned boyfriend and felt her job was
going nowhere. Consequently she decided to return to Brown University for graduate
school. It was here that she reencountered Alan, but this time as a professor for one of
her graduate seminars. She and he started dating, despite the university policy, and when
Alan proposed on Christmas Eve of 1985, she decided that she wanted an MRS. Degree
instead of an MA degree. They were married on February 12, 1986. Arlene and Alan
have three children. Beth, who is the eldest, is 19. Emily, the second daughter, was born
only 13 months later and Meg, the youngest, is 17. The oldest and youngest girls are
away at college, and the middle daughter joined the Air Force.
When I was needed again for rehearsal it was to sing through three pieces which I will be singing in the show. During our practice of “And What If We Had Loved Like That?”, I really loved the vocal blend that Tim and I created. There will be a lot for the two of us to explore emotionally. Debbie asked for a ritard at measure 72 which will allow Alan and Arlene to create a beautiful acting moment. It is truly the first time for Arlene and Alan to communicate in their 20-year long marriage; that’s a powerful image to activate in the song. Next Debbie worked with me on “Patterns”, my solo. Debbie suggested a hollow, ethereal sound for the end of the song. I think this will work well to portray Arlene’s doubts about her choices, her frustration with herself, and her confusion as to where to proceed from there. The final song we rehearsed was “The Plaza Song”, the one with the questionable lyrics. I need more practice on this song, not only because it is difficult melodically, but because I need to make acting choices throughout the song that will show the audience how I feel about this surprise pregnancy. Overall tonight’s rehearsal was extremely beneficial.

Monday, August 28, 2006: Tonight’s rehearsal was the first time the ensemble actors were present. Therefore music rehearsal focused on adding them to pieces the six principal actors had already rehearsed. Since I was not actively participating in much of the rehearsal, I jotted down more backstory notes.

Arlene’s father was an office manager and her mother was a homemaker. She has two older brothers whom she believed her parents focused upon. While Arlene always intended to break the mold her mother had formed, she wasn’t completely successful. She married Alan when she was 23 and had children right away so that her family
became her primary focus and her career was secondary. Nonetheless, she was able to maintain an adjunct position at the university teaching an undergraduate creative writing course and working part-time in the admissions recruitment department. Thus when during the show Arlene says that she is working on a book, it doesn’t seem completely out of character for her, despite the fact that it is a charade.

I feel that as we get into staging later this week, I will need to imagine some more important moments with Alan to help flesh out our relationship. One possibility is that Alan missed Meg’s birth because he was stuck at a conference. This began a break in communication that Arlene excused at the time, but which she never fully resolved. Another section of the script that will provide a great chance to explore various emotional planes will be Act 2, Scene 4 (pg. 68). It is in this scene where Arlene relays to Alan some of her mixed emotions and frustration about the pregnancy. On a practical note, I need to rehearse song #’s 18, 21, and 22.

*Tuesday, August 29, 2006:* This will be a short entry because I was not able to take many notes during the rehearsal. We had our first read/sing through tonight. It was difficult to take in all the things that will need to be developed while going through this process other than the obvious wrong notes here and there. I tried to let the whole show wash over me. I am really looking forward to some of the scenes where Arlene is in conflict with Alan because these scenes are the most representative of the world in which our version of Baby is set, a modern society where much is neither black nor white but grey. I also had a moment where I heard my mother’s voice coming out of my mouth.
They say every woman becomes her mother eventually and if I can do that for this role, I will feel that my transformation to a middle-aged woman has been successful.

Thursday, August 31, 2006: Since Wednesday’s rehearsal was cancelled due to inclement weather, tonight was our first blocking rehearsal. We began the evening with Act 1 Scene 5 (“I Want It All”). Our director’s preferred method of working on a scene is to give all the physical movement first before the scene is run. Since this scene was comprised largely of a song, we had to get additional blocking/choreography from our choreographer Paul Gebb. Paul, who similarly likes to give all his movements before the number is run, did so since the song was not dance step intensive. He had to provide some training in handling a basketball for both Leah and Margaret-Ellen since their characters must be fairly adept with a basketball during this number. I watched this with interest, but also gave thought as to how Arlene reacts to all the “antics” of Pam and Lizzie during this scene. Nick gave direction that she feels knowing and probably slightly annoyed at times during the number. I feel that Arlene begins in a place of being too “busy” to deal with the younger women’s exuberance, but eventually lets their wonder transport her back to her first pregnancy and gets enthusiastically caught up.

As we ran “I Want It All” I had some interesting acting moments that organically occurred. When I had to stand to take the ball away from the younger women, I held it during my solo. But I didn’t just hold it; on the lyrics “There are things you lose . . . like an overtone of romance”, I started to hand the ball to Lizzie and then took it away. During the lyric “an element of surprise”, I did a fake pass to Pam. These movements
just came out and felt fantastic. I hope that when I revisit this scene later in the rehearsal process, that I can keep these moments as fresh as when they occurred originally.

After a short break we worked on Act 1 Scene 3, “The Plaza Song” scene. While the work process was similar to the earlier scene, the most enjoyable part of this scene was beginning to connect with Tim as Alan. In this number Arlene is lamenting her current state, and Alan is reassuring himself that the pregnancy is essential to their marriage. It is funny yet poignant because it illustrates to the audience for the first time the breakdown in communication between these two people. My research into the concerns of middle-aged women indicates that a breakdown of communication within their marriages is a common occurrence. Often the marriage seems to move along on auto-pilot. The woman feels left behind in her needs and wants because she and her partner have forgotten how to express themselves. This is frequently a point where even long-term relationships may crumble under this pressure. We finished blocking and running the scene ahead of schedule. I need to thank Nick for his understanding of my concern with the lyrics in “The Plaza Song”. He is allowing me not to say the lyrics I have a problem with and that is amazing!

*Wednesday, September 6, 2006:* My first duty as assistant director for *Baby* was to set up some kind of birthing/parenting educational experience for the cast. With the help of Kim Ball, one of my colleagues from the summer and a former delivery nurse, the cast was able to go on the monthly tour of the Birthing Center at Ormond Memorial Hospital. Our tour guide was Susan Bekken, a nurse in the unit and head of parental education for the Center. The facilities we toured are considered Level One Care, which
translates as Healthy Moms/Healthy Babies. The Birthing Center is equipped to handle neo-natal emergencies, but women who are experiencing problems during their pregnancies would want a Level 2 facility for care during the birthing process. Besides explaining the outstanding facilities and level of care one would receive as a patient at the center, she also gave us valuable information on the process of pregnancy and parenting. She explained that a new mother needs to take the opportunity to sleep whenever her baby sleeps especially for the first three weeks. If the drug Pitocin is not used to induce labor, then a woman can even get up and walk around during labor. Susan demonstrated a gentle, good-humored manner as she answered questions from pregnant women who were also taking the tour. She has also agreed to come and provide a class with our cast sometime next week. I am really looking forward to her instruction.

The rest of rehearsal tonight consisted of staging the first number of the show “We Start Today”. The cast’s focus was strained from the earlier excitement of the birthing center tour and probably from sheer tiredness. The first number consists of some choreography that is not what I had envisioned for the characters. I will work to make it mean something to Arlene, which is what our choreographer, Paul, suggested. The show seems to be coming together well, and I look forward to our time next week when we will track through our character’s scenes and discuss character background.

Thursday, September 7, 2006: The more scenes that we block for Alan and Arlene, the better sense I get of who they are. We blocked Act 1 Scenes 10 and 11 this evening. Since the scenes were not terribly long, particularly scene 10, Nick took the time to discuss some character background with Tim (Alan) and me. I had a concern
about not turning to look at Alan after telling him about my (Arlene’s) desire not to have the baby. Nick feels that if Arlene looked at Alan at that moment she would cave in and accede to his wishes. It has already taken all the control she possessed to bring herself to share her innermost thoughts. I can understand this reasoning and will work to keep myself “busy” during Alan’s dialogue following my speech. Nick also suggested that perhaps Alan and I have a ritual that we do before we go to sleep every night and Alan skips it this evening. Tim and I discussed possibly kissing our thumbs and putting them together. I think this is cute and I’ll see if he still likes it the next time we do our scene.

Scene 11 is a little tougher for me as Arlene. Arlene doesn’t like how the realtor who has come to view her home reacts to her and her home. For Arlene the house represents much of her life and she doesn’t want it to be judged by an outsider. Thus, she decides to get rid of Ms. Hart, the realtor, by saying that she is pregnant. I need to find the conflict in Arlene as she makes this choice partially out of defensiveness, partially out of guilt towards Alan. This is not an easy crossroads for Arlene. Perhaps I, as Arlene, can motivate this choice out of a place of fear of the repercussions of my previous decision to end the pregnancy. I’ll work on it. The evening ended with a run-through of Act 1 Scenes 1-3. Scene 3, which is our “Plaza Song” scene seemed much smoother, and I’m beginning to connect with the familiarity that Arlene shares with her husband. I believe having good chemistry with my fellow actor, Tim, is aiding this. The first act is almost blocked; the time is going quickly!

*Monday, September 11, 2006:* The music review that began the evening’s rehearsal was not an event that needs to be chronicled in detail here. It was basically
conducted to check certain harmonies, rhythms, etc. One concern that it did bring to light however, was whether it is appropriate to create riffs when they are not explicitly written in the music. Even though I was not the person doing this, it made me wonder if that is allowed how it will affect the final product.

The majority of the evening was spent learning the cha-cha dance that Alan and Arlene perform during Act 1 Scene 4. We were sent to another room to work on dance steps with the choreographer while the rest of the cast worked on blocking their parts of the scene. The choreography process was an interesting one because we as actors were able to collaborate to some extent with the choreographer to create the best version of the steps he wanted performed. In addition to that challenge, I had to dust off my ballroom training which was fun but required a lot of concentration. When we returned and were integrated with the rest of the cast, we were urged by the director and choreographer alike to focus on the dance first and add our dialogue later.

Act 1 Scene 4 is the first important crossroads for Arlene. Dancing has always been the tool that Alan could use to sway Arlene to his view of things. When they were dating he took her dancing, which she found amazing since most men didn’t know how to perform ballroom dances. The last time that they danced like this was at a friend’s wedding as notated in the script. I think at the time they were trying to decide on a new car. While they danced Alan convinced Arlene they should go with a Mustang instead of a Buick. After twenty years Arlene knows this trick, but she still loves getting swept away by the emotions that are released when she dances with her husband. By allowing him to convince her at this point to keep the baby, she isn’t being completely true to
herself which will continue to gnaw at her throughout the show. Tomorrow evening is a put-together of Act I. I look forward to seeing all the pieces of which I am not a part play out as I observe each couple’s unique relationship.

Tuesday, September 12, 2006: A put-together is not always the most fulfilling of rehearsal periods. Whereas it is good to get an idea of the developmental arc of the show, it is also a time where there is a lot of starting and stopping which frequently causes loss of focus. In my mind, I needed to be more present in all my time as Arlene, a concern which was echoed by the director. He asked me to bring more energy to my grounded quality for Arlene. Perhaps I felt that I was visiting la-la land because it was the first time to run everything in the first act with dialogue and blocking. Other director’s notes from the run dealt with moving the bed (our first time to have it) and a need for a clear difference between the words “mother” and “mutha”. I also felt that I did not adequately support my belting as I sang in “I Want It All”. Before we finish the act on Friday, I will look over all my lines to see what and why I’m saying what I do as Arlene.

Wednesday, September 13, 2006: Act 2 blocking began this evening. Act 2 Scenes 2 and 4 are possibly the shortest and most difficult scenes in the show. In Scene 4, which is what we blocked first, Arlene and Alan are having dinner and Arlene broaches the subject of her concerns with their marital relationship. Because there is so little dialogue that leads into this course of action, it is a difficult transition. After Tim and I were given our basic movements we spent some time discussing the character development behind the dialogue. I need to consider what happened before this scene to cause Arlene to say the things she is saying including the song “Patterns”. The director
also urged me to think of an inner dialogue in which Arlene has been imagining Alan’s various responses to what she is wrestling with, which surprises Alan as it comes tumbling out.

The scene requires the actors as their respective characters to really listen to one another to make the scene more sincere. I can also focus on the difficulty of bringing up a problem in the relationship and of putting it into words. No one likes to talk about problems, but perhaps making the problem known will help even if solutions are not provided immediately.

The second scene in Act 2 (which obviously proceeds what we blocked first this evening) will help me to set the appropriate tone in the later scene. This scene is Arlene’s big soliloquy moment where she sings “Patterns”. While I look forward to working more on the individual pieces of the “Patterns” puzzle by myself and with the director, his notes tonight following a walk-through of the song cautioned strongly against letting Arlene sink into self-pity. She is making discoveries about herself and the patterns she allows herself to fall into, therefore anger or doubt might be more appropriate feelings to express. Every second of this scene must radiate the sense that Arlene is voicing her concerns for the first time. Perhaps even a bit of wonder would be appropriate. I said to the director “yes she’s happy about a baby, but it is not where she wanted to be at this point in her life so it will take some examining”. I desperately need some downtime to refine my ideas for my character and this show.

*Thursday, September 14, 2006:* The most frustrating part of the whole process of *Baby* for me right now is not being able to spend the time on it that I want to spend. I
would love to just spend an entire day analyzing my discoveries, living as Arlene, and working on difficult music spots, but I can’t and maintain my daily class work. A conversation with a colleague from this summer reminded me today that life is like that if you are making a living in the theatre, as I aspire to do. It’s just so hard though, because I want to give so much to this project.

Tonight’s rehearsal was a music review which was helpful for me technically. We went over a few of the pieces in which I sing. The most beneficial part was singing through “And What If We Had Loved Like That?” which hadn’t been sung since our initial music rehearsals. I need to be more invested in this song, but that just seems indicative of my feelings about the whole show right now. I guess it’s the mid-rehearsal process slump. I was only at rehearsal for an hour, so I didn’t really have any profound character realizations tonight. Hopefully sometime this weekend I’m going to do some character research by wearing my pregnant belly to the mall to go shopping. I’ll make a special non-rehearsal entry about that if I’m able to do it.

Friday, September 15, 2006: I didn’t do much in rehearsal tonight. Basically all I was needed for was a single run of Act 1, Scenes 10 and 11 (first time off book for both) and vocal rehearsals of some group singing. There was a discrepancy in Nick’s memory of our blocking versus what he had actually given us. Although we, the actors, were confirmed as being correct, we concluded that the original blocking felt cramped and it was adjusted to accommodate the actual bed set piece we were utilizing. In Scene 11, I did not feel that Tim and I were able to create effective acting patterns and emotional connection because of having to stop several times to accommodate the actress playing
the realtor in the scene. She was not present for the initial blocking of the scene, so it was the first time the three of us worked together and it was understandably rough. Because of the pace of the evening’s rehearsal, I don’t feel that I had any great acting breakthroughs.

I did observe some of the other scenes in rehearsal, including “The Ladies Singing Their Song” which opens Act 2. This number will really be fantastic after it is polished. Each woman involved, the character Lizzie plus the four ensemble women, is very enthusiastic and dedicated to the delivery of this humorously touching song. I continue to be concerned about the progress of one particular actor who does not appear to be able to process directorial notes, or apply what we have learned in class to the rehearsal process. I feel that this inability or unwillingness is hurting the entire cast; I hope the situation will improve. I am especially looking forward to Monday’s rehearsal when we will have a birthing/parental education class.

Monday, September 18, 2006: Birthing Class! I learned so much tonight. I tried to take copious notes from the information Susan Bekken, the parent educator from Ormond Memorial Hospital, was giving us. She began the class by saying five words associated with the birth process and asked us to write down the first thing that came to mind with each one. Her prompts were labor, birth, parenting, epidural and back labor to which my responses were long, baby, challenging, ouch and weird, respectively.

We then proceeded to talk about pain management, which is an issue that pregnant couples must determine during their education classes. The idea of a needle going into my spine freaks me out to say the least, but Susan brought up an interesting
issue which I had not considered concerning pain management. What if you, as the woman, decided you needed the epidural and your coach or partner said no because of a previous decision you had made? Even though the woman should have the final say, she would feel conflicted about going against her previous decision which her husband/coach is representing. Susan brought posters, models and videos to show us. She also did a little acting herself, to show us mothers in labor and the proper way to walk and get out of chairs while pregnant. The following is basically a transcript of the rest of my notes from the class.

Hopefully, women will not be too uncomfortable prior to the last two months of their pregnancy. More women having their second and third pregnancies are opting for epidurals during labor because they have already had a natural child birth. Susan chose to have all three of her children without pain medication, but a mother must really want to do this to make that choice. The uterus is tipped over and sits on top of the bladder during pregnancy. A need to urinate frequently is one of the first symptoms of pregnancy. At 8 weeks of development a baby’s central nervous system is completely developed and a baby could feel a touch. At 12 weeks of development a fetus is a perfect miniature of a full-grown baby. At 20 weeks (five months) the mother can feel the baby moving, which feels like butterflies fluttering, or gas across the abdomen. The baby doesn’t weigh a pound yet. At 28 weeks (7 months), there is more relief for the mother’s bladder because the baby starts to move up. Baby movements can be observed by the mother and others, and the baby can see, hear and recognize voices. The mother’s back goes into a swayed position as a natural compensation to the growing uterus to balance
the new center of gravity. At 36 weeks the mother will experience lots of indigestion and
gas because her intestines are being compressed by the baby, and a lot of pressure is
being exerted on the stomach, also causing heartburn.

The uterus is only attached to the pelvis in 3 places, by two round ligaments that
are only 3 inches in length pre-pregnancy and by a cluster of muscles that attach to the
backbone. The stress placed on these three body parts is enormous and accounts for the
various back, pelvic, and abdominal muscle pain. Susan says a good way to relieve this
back pain is to practice standing up straight by tucking the hips under and thinking of the
head being suspended on a string. At 38 weeks the baby begins to drop into the mother’s
pelvis, a phenomenon known as lightening, which can be felt especially by first time
mothers. Only 1 out of 10 women’s water breaks at home, usually it must be broken by
the hospital staff. Forty weeks is considered to be full term for a baby. Childbirth classes
cannot fully prepare a mother for how labor will feel. There are four stages of labor
known as early, active, transition and birth. A woman will feel progressively worse as
she progresses through the different stages. If a woman has back labor it means the
baby’s head hasn’t turned toward the mother’s back as it is supposed to; therefore, she
will have severe back pain as the baby progresses through her pelvic region. It is
imperative to move her off of her back as long as she hasn’t had an epidural. This will
relieve the pains and get the baby into an easier position for delivery. An interesting and
humorous fact was that coaches, frequently the dads, often hyperventilate because they
are trying to breathe and push with the mom. Susan compared the pushing part of labor
to chopping wood in summertime, extremely uncomfortable and difficult. Some women
opt to have doulas, trained women who help with the birth process and caretaking of the mother after the birth. Studies show that the presence of a doula in the room has decreased the occurrence of caesarean sections.

During pregnancy when the baby is being carried low the mother can’t cross her legs. A seated pregnant woman will lean back to make more room for her upper body. When she gets up from a chair she must scoot to the edge of the seat, put one foot in front of the other, and push with her arms and thighs to get up. Often she will need to support her abdomen with her hands. Stretching exercises that pregnant women can do include full arms out to the side, lifting legs and twirling ankles and stretching legs with flexed feet since pointed feet will cause leg cramps. A woman’s body will return to its pre-pregnancy state within 6-8 weeks of the birth. Birth is a miracle!

After the class was over we blocked the remainder of Act 2. This consisted of the final scene, which is Lizzie’s birthing section, and Scenes 6, 8 which are respectively, the set-up and then the meeting between Alan and Arlene when they discuss their marriage. In these particular scenes I need to focus on trying to figure out what Alan is really saying. I also have to make it clear that while the marriage is in question especially at the beginning of Scene 8, that by the end of “And What if We Had Loved Like That?” it is on the mend. Wednesday night will be the work-through for Tim and me. I feel we need to collaborate more on our “marriage’s” inner-workings.

_**Tuesday, September 19, 2006:**_ I had intended to visit the Motherhood/Maternity shop over the weekend, but didn’t make it there until today. I enlisted my mother, who is visiting Florida, to go along with me. Originally I had thought I would tell the clerk that I
was an actor doing field research, but since there weren’t any other women in the store shopping, I decided to just “play” pregnant. I picked out several outfits to try on and my Mom and I discussed various aspects of pregnancy that one doesn’t think about right away, i.e. your abdomen not going back to its original shape immediately. She thought one of the outfits I tried on was so cute she wanted to purchase it for me for “the future”. Ultimately, we decided against it. I did decide to purchase one t-shirt that said “Baby” on it to wear for rehearsals. At the register my Mom and I engaged in improvisation with the clerk. She asked how far along I was and I responded 7 months. We also had to come up with a due date, to which I said “What did the doctor say today?” and my Mom replied, without batting an eye, “November 12”. The clerk congratulated me on my first baby, another piece of the improvisational puzzle. She did her job very well in offering me an application for a credit card that saves money for college for the baby. I declined saying I would have to talk with my fiancé Ryan and Mom added that the two of us didn’t make financial decisions without one another. I also declined a trial membership to Parenting magazine citing the probability of its getting lost in the transition of my move from Florida to Ohio. We were on a roll with our improvisation. I did get signed up for the Motherhood/Maternity perks program and received a free gift bag with my t-shirt. All in all it was a fun experience and wearing the pregnancy belly out in public forced me to practice realistic pregnant walking, sitting, standing up and getting in and out of car. I also tried to practice the tips Susan Bekken, the parent educator nurse, gave us for relieving back pain as even the pregnancy padding causes a swayback condition.
Tonight’s rehearsal was listed as a run-through of Act 2 off book. It actually began with a significant amount of time dedicated to the two largest ensemble numbers, “Fatherhood Blues” and “The Ladies Singing Their Song”. I took this break as an opportunity to look over the blocking for Act 2 another time. When we finally began the run of Act 2, I was without a husband (since Tim was ill) thus I have notes only for my one solo scene, Act 2 Scene 2, “Patterns”. At the time it was blocked our director cautioned me to not let Arlene fall into a place of self-pity. During today’s run-through, I felt that I took a journey during the song and made discoveries as Arlene, and as Tara. I especially like the moments toward the end of the piece where I put my hands on my pregnant stomach and looked over at the bench, where I started the piece, for the lyrics “start again”. After that I walked back to the bench, sat down and on the pause before the lyrics “at all” I had a moment of questioning and realization out to the audience. Arlene had come full circle in realizing the rut she was in. Nick acknowledged that I had not only incorporated his advice from the first session about the arc of the piece, but also information about movement when pregnant gleaned from the birthing class on Monday. He suggested that I also remember to adjust my stomach as I stood, which I had forgotten to do. Nick said that allowing the reality of life and its sometimes depressing patterns is enough pathos for the piece, and after that run I’m beginning to agree. I did fairly well with my memorization of the rest of Act 2 tonight.

Wednesday, September 20, 2006: I had been looking forward to this rehearsal for a while. We started at the beginning of the show and worked through the Alan/Arlene scenes. As we worked through each scene we would discuss character development, the
progression of the plot and our characters’ relationships. Sometimes things worked well and we would just get a few notes about tweaking “pieces of the puzzle”. Other times we would have to approach lines from different points of view and try new motivations to find the right mix of emotions, subtext, and stage presence. It was difficult in some ways, but so rewarding in the end.

Act 1 Scene 3 was our first project (the opening scene is not strictly an Alan/Arlene scene so we bypassed it). Since both characters are jogging as the scene opens, Nick suggested that we both be a bit out of breath, because we are probably not fitness gurus. This makes sense to me. Alan begins in a state of confusion about when this pregnancy occurred. Arlene needs to wrestle with what this pregnancy means in relation to the plans she was making for the second half of her life. She had wanted to scale down, to take vacations, and a baby was nowhere in that plan. She begins to consider an abortion so she must radiate a perturbed energy. The dialogue of this scene is very surface oriented because neither character will say what he/she is really thinking, but the subtext should say the opposite. Using the subtext throughout the line is essential. For example “You took me to the Plaza hotel and I wanted to go on a tour of the Napa Wine Valley” is functioning beneath the line “I bought these things, we’re going to use them.”

The “Plaza Song” is another challenge in relaying the relationship between Alan and Arlene. The two of them begin the song in a similar state of wonderment but progress to two very different destinations. Accenting important words like plaza and twentieth was a note from Nick to aid intelligibility. I need to turn the lyrics, “did more
than just pass out”, into a real discovery of what occurred between Alan and Arlene. “I vowed to love it” is motivated by Arlene’s limited memories of the anniversary occurrences. She wanted Alan to believe she was having a good time, even though it was not the anniversary get-away she had hoped for, and she thought that drinking the champagne might help her to feel better about it herself. Instead she blacked out. The middle section of the song beginning with “I guess we tried too hard” needs a different feeling from the first, a new inner tactic. In my backstory, I feel that Alan wanted to make up for their 19th wedding anniversary, during which he was out of town, and promised to do something “big and special” for their important 20th anniversary. Arlene realizes he tried to do something nice with the Plaza visit and she did want to have fun. Visualizing the history that preceded the 20th anniversary night evokes a certain sense of pathos for this section of music. In the final section of the piece, Arlene needs to make it very apparent that she needs to get out of the house before she melts down as a result of anxiety concerning her pregnancy. Nick directed me to look at Tim during this tirade to add fuel to the fire. A logistical note, I may want to add a turning run during the song to see all sides of the audience, I also need an exasperated sound as I begin to exit into the vom.

The sheer mass of notes from just the previous scene is really indicative of how in-depth we worked within each scene. Act 1 Scene 10 was the next project of the evening. It builds upon the energy Arlene builds in Act 1 Scene 5 as the other women in the OB/GYN’s office encourage her to use her sexy lingerie instead of returning it. It also feeds upon the enthusiasm of Act 1 Scene 9 where Alan reveled in his approaching
re-introduction to fatherhood during a faculty softball game. Once again, Arlene and Alan’s dialogue begins as they mask their true feelings, but Arlene begins to change this when she asks Alan about keeping the child. At the beginning of the scene, Arlene needs to show the effects of having caught Alan’s spring fever and enthusiasm as she emerges in her new lingerie. When she admits what she wants, she needs to be harder on herself because she is weighing things against a person and feels guilty about it. Time is also wasting away for her to make a choice to terminate the pregnancy because she is 3 months into the pregnancy at this point. Her hormones are high, and so are her acting stakes. On our final run-through of the scene, I more effectively portrayed the devastation Arlene feels at having achieved what she wanted, and not being sure if it’s the right choice. Tim and I thought that our nightly ritual as Alan and Arlene might be a little kiss, but when he turns over and denies me this, Arlene is even more confused at the end of the scene. When we run the scene again on Monday, Nick wants me to try reaching for Tim’s hand when he puts it outside the covers and then pulling my hand back at the last second.

Act I ends for Alan and Arlene in scene 11 where they are showing their house to a prospective realtor. I suggested eating something when I enter the scene, which may stay in; for rehearsal we used chocolate covered pretzels. I was encouraged to make my “Southern belle” impersonation more exaggerated. I also needed to physically force the realtor out the door (who will be resisting me as best she can). Nick asked me if I were making the decision to keep the baby during the scene. Although originally I hadn’t planned to do that, he advised it would have a stronger impact if I could. We decided that
Arlene’s decision point to keep the baby will come when Alan says “my wife wants, I mean we want a little apartment for two”. The decision point must be clear for the audience as well as the intention that the decision is a joint one and not Alan forcing Arlene into it.

We forged ahead into Act 2, which in some ways didn’t get as much refining time as Act 1. However, we had developed a rhythm and a relationship base that could be elaborated on for Act 2 and didn’t take as much painstaking analysis. In the second scene of Act 2, otherwise known as “Patterns”, I needed to add the acknowledgement of feeling the baby move. My ending realization, which is the fruitlessness of my patterns, needed a bigger focus shift to keep it from drifting toward self-pity, the attitude which I had aimed to eliminate. Nick also emphasized the need to take more time at the beginning of the piece to prepare for the song and settle into the journey that I’ll need to take during the song.

In Act 2, Scene 4 the run-through yielded some more important things for Tim and me to tackle. We needed to realize that the discussion we have is a big deal because our characters don’t fight; this encounter is as close as they get to yelling at one another. The shadow of the question of divorce hangs over both characters throughout the scene. Arlene shocks Alan with her frankness (which has been building up since she sang “Patterns”). I need to push Alan to try to see the point of my argument. When he doesn’t get it, that communication breach pushes me to the breaking point of saying “I feel like running away”. Having to acknowledge that Arlene and Alan’s best moments were canoeing with the kids is another sore spot. I cannot let this scene be too easy for me.
For my character’s exit from the stage to be merited, I must focus on creating an emotional build-up that borders on a breakdown. Arlene can’t breakdown completely in front of her husband, and must leave the stage to cover her weakness.

The last scene I took notes about was Scene 6 although we did go over Scene 8 but ran short on time. Nick felt I brought a proper weight to Arlene’s reactions in Scene 6 (on the phone with Alan) which translates into Scene 8. In Scene 8, I feel Arlene must be trying to figure out what Alan is telling her and to allow the expression of their feelings to lead her to realize they can continue as a couple. I feel as though I have a much better grasp on the show, my place in it, and how to move on from here. I’m ready for the stumble-through Monday night!

*Monday, September 25, 2006: Our first night on the stage was quite a rough one. Besides trying to figure out the spacing, we were using props we’d never had, and moving set pieces in a bigger space with seemingly less time. I realize that the constant stopping and starting was necessary, but I felt very disconnected from the beautiful acting moments I discovered in the last rehearsal period. Tim and I got together before rehearsal to run through our dancing scene (which wasn’t rehearsed last Wednesday). Although we thought we had it figured out, it still did not time out correctly and it is in urgent need of help! Margaret-Ellen (Lizzie), Leah (Pam) and I also got together before rehearsal to run the scene in the doctor’s office with “ballography”. It became another frustrating stopping point in rehearsal. I need to make a plot for myself of all my entrances/exits, costume change locations, and prop placement locations.*
By the end of the evening I was exhausted. The following is a list of notes from the director (and a few of my own) for the running of Act 1 that we completed. The cast needs more energy in everything. We all need to practice active listening whenever we are not “doing” something. In Act 1 Scene 1: I need to make sure my line “No, it was lovely” is energized before going into the song. My pronunciation of the lyrics “at 43” sounded like “et 43”. The canon section of the opening song must be active (interact more with Alan) and don’t put hands on my stomach during the heartbeat section because it is not the baby’s heartbeat. Act 1 Scene 3: This scene needs to begin with vocalizations. Since there won’t be a prop for me to use to check my pulse, I need to start practicing checking it on my neck. Utilizing a vocalization as I leave the stage to go into the vom will help the momentum of the scene. (In the Gillespy Theatre, where our production will run, a vom is a hallway entrance from the audience side of the stage, instead of backstage.) I need to remove my own headphones on the “what?” line and not get so far away from the stage or Alan. Act 1 Scene 4: I need to end up further downstage right by the end of the scene. Act 1 Scene 5: Remember to enter early enough to pass Lizzie and sign in first with the nurse. Act 1 Scene 10: Great work! Act 1 Scene 11: Tim and I need to spin further downstage left on our lift. Act 1 Scene 12: Look happily at Lizzie when I move her bed offstage.

Tuesday, September 26, 2006: We began running Act 2 onstage tonight. Because I am so busy during the actual run, the only chance I really have to take notes is during the “notes” session after a run. The following are director, music director, and personal notes. Act 2 Scene 2: “Patterns” presented a clear emotional journey. I need to be
careful about the accuracy of the opening pitches of the piece. I remembered having a moment during the song where I couldn’t hear the piano, which probably accounted for the pitch issues. Debbie asked me to be mindful of singing too softly as well as remembering to keep presence in the tone. Measure #58 of the song needed to be louder.

Act 2 Scene 4: I need to allow the seething, frantic energy of Arlene’s outpouring of information to carry the speech at the end. The line “I feel like running away” is a strong point that then builds to the end of the speech, perhaps to the point of tears and no longer having words which is the motivation to leave, besides the fact that there is no more written dialogue. A general note to all was to have a higher level of comfort with the text so there could even begin to be overlap when appropriate.

Act 2 Scene 8: Remember that I (Arlene) was about to leave Alan for awhile. I had always envisioned this as going to stay with a relative for a short period of time, but the director sees it as leaving my husband. With this in mind, he felt that this scene needs to be more serious and really utilize the feeling of being the “first” time. “And What If We Had Loved Like That?” is Alan and Arlene’s duet at the end of this scene. Despite its relative easy ballad vocal style, it needs to be difficult to sing from an emotional standpoint. Nick questioned the kiss between Arlene and Alan at the end of the scene, but I felt it should stay in because it is the first time this couple reawaken their love and passion. He said to keep it in for now and to work for a better sense of discovery. It is not a magic fix. Vocally we were asked by the music director, Debbie, to watch our dynamics.

Act 2 Scene 9: “The Birth Sequence” song was not ready for performance, and we were asked to go over our respective lyrics and dynamics.
We also received some musical notes from Monday’s run of Act 1. The opening song must build at the lines “ivied walls” which is measure 193, starting softer and allowing for a dynamic build. In #4 “The Plaza Song”, Tim and I need to pass the baton better with our dynamics. In #5 “Baby, Baby, Baby”, everyone needs to be more solid on the ending. Debbie asked me to check my ending pitches, measures 101-102, in song #6 “I Want it All”. She thinks I am missing a pitch difference. This was better overall then Monday’s run, but still rough. After the notes session we worked on some trouble areas. Tim and I got to run our cha-cha with the choreographer, Paul. It was much needed and made us feel that we would have better control of that scene. We also refined the end of “I Want It All” which had been getting stiff due to lack of movement.

Wednesday, September 27, 2006: I arrived early to go over Act 2 Scene 8 with Tim. We not only went through our dialogue, but worked on how we will come together for our kiss at the end of the scene to make it more realistic. We ran the entire show tonight, and the energy level was much higher (thanks in large part to having our music director, Kevin Wallace, present to play!) I felt that I applied the notes I had been given over the past two evenings. I still had a few word flubs, but I think it had more to do with concentrating on the acting than not knowing my dialogue. Since it was so close to 10:00 p.m. when we finished our run, we were not given notes as a group. I will either get them as an e-mail or before we begin rehearsing tomorrow night. My own note for myself tonight is to make sure the audience can see my conflict in the doctor’s office in Act 1, where I am weighing my previous enjoyment of motherhood with the pressure of deciding whether to keep the baby. If the audience can’t see this battle early on, it will be
a shock to them later, and they will miss a big part of Arlene’s identity. I’m looking forward to becoming more involved with Arlene each night as we run the show, I’m getting to know her, and be better at being her.

Notes (added to journal on Thursday): Vocal notes were posted at rehearsal, they are not transcribed here. Act 1 Scene 1: Dance notes were the first notes given tonight for this scene. Everyone needs to open out to face the audience on the lyric “starting”. Each couple needs to review the recent additions to their individual couple choreography. Heads should be up on the lyrics “journey rushes on”. Nick’s only acting note for the opening was to keep the excitement in the dance. Act 1 Scene 3: Don’t check my pulse until after singing the lyric “except I’m pregnant”, and then check it on my neck. Act 1 Scene 4: Nice work on the cha-cha, but don’t forget to ad lib where necessary. Alan and Arlene are not “dancers”. Be more alarmed on “Alan, your back!” Everyone’s dancing circle around the bed was better in “Baby, Baby, Baby”. We will be adding a twirl in the dance somewhere. Act 1 Scene 5: I had good interplay and energy with the other women! Nick wants me to work on really “seeing” the totem poles made of fruit cans. Each woman is still lacking a sense of “one-upmanship” on the “Donnas and Margarets” lyrics. Act 1 Scene 10: This scene has a nice feeling. I’m letting the energy fall at times by failing to act on the line. Act 1 Scene 11: Overlap Ms. Hart’s protestations. Act 2 Scene 2: “Patterns” was excellent! Act 2 Scene 4: While the emotional build to exit from the dinner scene was better, it still needs some work, in my opinion. Act 2 Scene 8: Great last scene! Let Alan help me up from the bench. Let the kiss be a mutual decision, not just Alan. End the kiss further downstage left. During Thursday’s rehearsal we
couldn’t get down left, but we walked down after the kiss. This solution worked and we plan to make it a permanent part of the blocking.

_Thursday, September 28, 2006:_ Apparently I was at a disadvantage tonight, of which I was unaware, until the end of the evening. I didn’t receive the notes from the previous evening so I was given notes a second time. Had I known about the first notes, I wouldn’t have needed this, but I can’t change that fact now. Whereas last evening’s rehearsal went relatively smoothly, tonight’s was a veritable train wreck at certain sections. Many parts of the first act that are normally strong were struggling. I messed up lines in the Doctor’s office scene, which I’ve never done before. I plan to spend time on Friday just going over my lines so that they won’t get in the way of my acting.

These notes are from tonight’s rehearsal. Keep in mind some of these are repeats from Wednesday, since I didn’t receive those until after tonight’s rehearsal. Everyone’s energy was low, and we can’t use the area upstage of the red line, especially for Alan and me in the opening song. Act 1 Scene 1: My energy was not sufficient for the line, “No it was lovely”, providing no logical reason to break into song immediately after that line. I need to angle out to face house right/stage left during the opening dance; this is theatre in the ¾ round. Act 1 Scene 3: Remember to check pulse on neck after the line about being pregnant. Debbie asked Tim and me to check our tempos with Kevin, our music director, to make sure we are all at workable tempos. She probably felt “The Plaza Song” went too fast, but it seemed fine to me. Act 1 Scene 4: Put my hands on top of Alan’s at end of “Baby, Baby, Baby” so my arms don’t look dead. Act 1 Scene 5: Actively listen to Liz reading her notebook, and don’t forget to be surprised by Pam’s fake basketball pass
during “I Want it All”. Be careful not to drag the “I want” statements in the song so they
don’t crowd the final “I Want It All” lyrics. Act 1 Scene 10: Good energy! Act 1 Scene
11: I will be entering with a granola bar. The Southern belle accent was good, as well as
strong-arming Ms. Hart offstage. Act 1 Scene 12: Move Lizzie’s bed off more slowly
and don’t put down the bed brakes. Act 2 Scene 2: I lost the sense of discovery in
“Patterns”. Cut the clutching of my stomach on pained acting moments or it will look
like the baby is hurting me. Musical notes were next in the note session. Measure 13:
Keep the momentum going on the first “just look” lyric. Measure 20: On the lyric
“away” beware of singing the second vowel sound of the diphthong too early, it muddies
the tone. Keep Measure 41 in tempo during the second verse. Debbie, the music
director, did comment that my song was heart-wrenching and beautiful. Act 2 Scene 4:
The line “I feel like running away” is still not working for Nick. Tomorrow night he
wants me to try making a deliberate voice inflection reference back to my previous
speech. This has been a very frustrating speech for me because I cannot seem to get what
Nick is asking for and still make a logical emotional build that I can relate to for Arlene.
Act 2 Scene 8: Great work on the intentions of the duet. Make the lyric “veer” clearer.
Allow Tim to help me up from the bench and contribute to the kiss at the end. Arlene
and Alan do this together. This was contrary to what Tim and I had worked out as being
logical for our characters in this moment, but we are willing to try Nick’s version. On
measure 64 of “And What If We Had Loved Like That?” remember to begin the
crescendo at a forte level and grow louder. Don’t wait too long at the end of the song to
come back in at measure 95.
This time of rehearsal is good for discovering the continuity of the show, but difficult for maintaining and growing in my character. Maybe tomorrow will help all these notes to gel with my character and actor journey.

*Friday, September 29, 2006:* My whole thesis committee was in attendance for tonight’s rehearsal. I arrived early to run through the basketball passing with Leah and Margaret-Ellen for our doctor’s office scene in Act 1 and then to run various musical numbers and spacing concerns with the director/music director/vocal director etc. Probably the hardest part of this pre-rehearsal time was when one of my cast-mates took over and gave the rest of us choreography for the end of the “Baby, Baby, Baby” number. We had not been alerted that this person was to act as a dance captain, and it was disconcerting to us to say the least.

Once the run started tonight, it was clear that it was going to be far superior to the previous evening’s work. I know that I spent a significant amount of time during the day reviewing my notes, working on my lines and music, and focusing for the evening’s rehearsal. It seemed that the rest of the cast had as well. During my first break in Act 1, I jotted down in my hand-written journal that the energy of the cast, especially the principals was much higher. I think the addition of an audience (my thesis committee) really helped this. “I Want it All” felt the best it has felt to date. Each woman found motivation in her lyrics to aid her excitement about her child’s approaching birth and thus the changes for her own life. Even the basketball passing seemed to work, even though Pam (Leah) and Lizzie (Margaret-Ellen) would get another note about their patterns later
in the evening from the choreographer. I did notice that throughout the evening, certain actors seemed to have trouble hearing the piano, including Tim and me during our duet.

Although this entry will include notes from the creative team as it usually does, I want to put the thoughts from my thesis committee into this log first. I spoke with each of my committee members after the rehearsal to get their feedback about my portrayal of Arlene. I wanted to see if they felt I was missing anything that I could work to incorporate through the final few rehearsals. Dr. Steve, my thesis chair, felt that Arlene is definitely coming across as the appropriate age. He said he compared my 43 year old Arlene to Leah’s 30-something Pam to figure out what the believable difference was. He decided it didn’t have to do with my physical carriage, as much as my vocal delivery and the grounded quality which lent an air of experience to Arlene, that Pam (and 20 year old Lizzie) should not yet have. Dr. Steve said if he were going to focus on one aspect of my performance it would center on the song “Patterns”. He said it was obvious that I knew that Arlene was singing about not being able to escape the box she has created for her life. To enrich this theme he said to examine two parts of the song. The first part centers on the delivery of the lyrics “Patterns in the ways I try, but never change”. He feels that line can be delivered as written or that “I try” can be in parentheses in the way the song is sung, as if reliving a previous moment when Arlene has said that to Alan. The second way may be more effective in stressing Arlene’s frustrations with herself. I’ll have to see if I can work this suggestion in or not, but it is fascinating. The second part that really emphasizes Arlene’s inner turmoil occurs at the end of the piece. The last three lines of the piece utilize the same melodic material with alternating starting notes. Dr. Steve felt
that I already had a good handle on not emphasizing any particular word or note.
However, he felt if I worked to keep each line almost expressionless it would emphasize
how each time is an attempt to get out of the routines of her life, but each new try has the
same result. They lead “nowhere at all”.

I shared concerns with Be Boyd and Earl Weaver about notes I was continuing to
receive despite the fact that I thought I had fixed the section in question several times.
Earl said that the Gillespy space is deceptive. When you are close to the stage the space
seems small, but when you sit up higher you begin to realize how big the space really is.
He thought that perhaps because the director is frequently sitting up higher, myfixes are
not making it all the way to the heights of the theater. This tied in with Be’s suggestion
to go farther with my portrayal at places. I think she was encouraging me to follow
through on Arlene’s emotions, whether they are beautiful or disturbing and to not be
afraid of taking them to extremes. If I go too far, the director can always pull me back.
Both committee members thought I was doing beautiful work and are excited to see the
completed performances. Earl also made a comment about being able to identify me (and
Tim) early on in the run as believably playing the eldest couple. I feel that all my
committee’s comments will help me to shape my choices for the last several rehearsals
before we open.

There were only a few notes from the Choreographer tonight. During “We Start
Today”, the couples need to start further downstage for dance breaks. Follow hands with
eyes and don’t lose the story during the dance. Paul would like an 8 count of cha-cha
taken out of “Baby, Baby, Baby” to alleviate the current giant pause before the line
“Alan, your back!” We will run the dance with the panels out at the end so we don’t crash into them.

Notes from the Director were the next order of business. Act 1 Scene 1: “No it was lovely” still isn’t reading with enough energy. This is one of the notes I mentioned earlier that is frustrating me. I told Nick I hadn’t forgotten about the note and am beginning to feel at a loss as to what to do, but that perhaps because I’m waiting to hear a certain place in the musical vamp that it was making it sound like I was losing energy. I asked Kevin and Debbie if we could practice this specifically in Sunday’s sitzprobe. Nick wants us to try greeting the ensemble couple nearby us at the beginning of the dance to raise the energy level. Act 1 Scene 3: I need to register more horror on the line “except I’m pregnant”. Act 1 Sc. 4: This was the best run of “Baby, Baby, Baby” yet! Act 1 Scene 5: Our characters are really well defined in this scene. We have good energy and good relationships with one another. Act 1 Scene 10: The line “When I weigh” needs to turn more toward center and stage right to be seen by a larger portion of the audience. Act 2 Scene 4: I received another note on the dinner scene speech. Nick feels that Arlene is fighting with herself about whether she should reveal everything she is feeling, in addition to the frustrated concerns she has just vented. Instead she finally gives up and says, “I’m going to bed”. Act 2 Scene 8: Intentions were correct in “And What If We Had Loved Like That?” but we, Arlene and Alan, got separated from the accompaniment again.

Notes from Music Director marked the final round of notes for today’s run. Song #’s refer to the order of songs in the musical score. Song #2 “We Start Today”: Make
line cue “It was lovely” louder so the band can hear it to begin music again. Song #4
“Plaza Song”: Tim and I need to cut off together on Measure 48. In measure 53+ Debbie
would like me to turn my head out a bit more to be heard by more of the audience. Song
#5 “Baby, Baby, Baby”: I am currently waiting too long to come in on my lyric “love
you” in measure 152. Song #6 “I Want It All”: Ending harmony blends were great and
we achieved strong tonal trade-offs on the “Donnas” and “Margarets” lines. Song #15A
“Patterns”: Take a breath that can be seen by the band before beginning the song. Also
take visible breaths before each “patterns” line. I need to review where the commas
occur in the song so that I don’t run separate ideas together. At measure 21 I forgot the
“and yet” lyric that leads into the “today” lyric. My entrance at measure 41 needs a
greater sense of purpose. The initial attack on the lyric, “that”, in measure 73 was great.
Song #20 “And What If We Had Loved Like That?”: Look over the words at measure
61; they should be, “I never asked for what I needed”. In measure 65 I need to wait for
the eighth note rest before singing the lyrics “some people get beyond the fear”. Measure
95 needs to be reviewed during sitzprobe. It contained some questionable harmonies.
Song #21 “Birth Sequence”: More energy is needed at the beginning. We will go over
Measures 1-43 to get all the entrances correct. Debbie generally advised us to remember
that wide ranges of dynamics are necessary throughout the show to add variety and
texture to the story.

     Sunday, October 1, 2006: Sitzprobe! We began the rehearsal starting from the
beginning of the show and worked through each piece. I only sing in the first couple
numbers of Act 1 before I have a long vocal break until “Patterns”. Today, however, to
utilize everyone’s time the best, we moved “Patterns” and “And What If We Had Loved Like That?” to the end of the rehearsal. During the pieces where I actually sang, I felt that I applied the notes I received on Friday night. Kevin, our music director, complimented me on taking an audible/visible breath before beginning “Patterns”, which is necessary for the band to come in with me. It was interesting to listen to my cast-mates this afternoon. Some of them were able to be more clear and precise with their music outside the environment of the show. Others rushed dialogue over music, or forgot it completely. One cast member is still straining vocally, and I’m concerned that he/she may loose his/her voice during the course of the run of the show. The band sounds fantastic. Tempos seem generally jaunty, which will add to the energy of the show. Adding the layer of their accompaniment will make the show much richer on Monday. Tomorrow is our first tech rehearsal, and we will be arriving early to go over certain problem spots, as well as learning how to move the panels that are part of the set. I don’t anticipate leaving until 12 A.M.

*Monday, October 2, 2006:* Technical Rehearsals are not conducive to great acting. Even the best intentioned actor begins to loose patience with the constant stopping and starting required during this period. Tonight was no exception. It took approximately twenty minutes to get through the first song of the show, just in time to have to take a break. We arrived at six to work on problem spots and didn’t do much until the panel tutorial at 6:30, a session which was flawed since even the technical staff wasn’t quite sure what was going on with the panels. I know technical rehearsals are not about the actors. It’s just hard to be the actor during them.
I was excited that I felt like I got the energy right for the line “No, it was lovely” and then promptly forgot the words to the song. This was frustrating to say the least. I felt that I lost motivation for much of my dialogue and singing, as did my fellow castmates, in trying to keep up with set changes. Fortunately, I think the creative staff saw what was happening and only took minimal notes. The only note that I wrote down was that the ending pose of “I Want It All” needs to be changed. That change will have to wait until tomorrow. Hopefully, tomorrow night will be smoother, but adding in the band, costumes, and lights may head the rehearsal down the same path.

Tuesday, October 3, 2006: Tonight a line from this past spring’s production of *Sunday in the Park with George* comes to mind—“Putting It Together”. The addition of costumes, lights, sound, and orchestra made a difference to the artistic staff in their perception of the show. For the actors, it was an improvement over the previous evening’s rehearsal, but still not back to the place we had found last Friday. Personally I felt like I overcame some barriers that I had had in place. The first was bringing a new energy to the line “No, it was lovely” (and I didn’t forget what came after it!) I waited to say the line until closer to the musical cue, and I think it worked better. At the very least I didn’t get a note about it. I also tried a new approach to Act 2 Scene 4. I tried to build more purpose into the lines preceding my “Well it cost us something” speech. This allowed me to take a bit more time after the line “I feel like running away”, and then at the end of the list of things we’d (Alan and Arlene) do I broke my speech and voice before “I’m going to bed”. Based on the enthusiastic response I received in notes to this approach, I will make every effort to keep it on this track.
The rest of this entry will be the notes from the artistic staff. Choreographer notes: Make sure to turn out to audience on lyric “starting” not “today” at beginning of “We Start Today”. Great job starting to tell story instead of just dancing the opening (note for whole cast). Remember new ending pose for “I Want It All” (ball on hip). Keep a feeling of rebellion in the moves for “I Want It All”. We have a show!

Directorial notes for the evening were not particularly extensive. Act 1 Scene 3: Nick advised me to get the idea of being shocked or dismayed about my pregnancy before singing the lyric “except I’m pregnant”. I forgot to check my pulse on this line again. A general note for the whole cast advised against adjusting our blocking for the lighting. Lighting would, hopefully, be fixed to work with our given blocking. Act 1 Scene 4: Aim to finish dance at end of “Baby, Baby, Baby” in line with panels in their V position. Act 1 Scene 11: Use the granola bar to accent the frustration in the lines directed toward Ms. Hart. Act 2 Scene 2: Exit upstage right after “Patterns”, the way we came in, to clear the way for a set change. Act 2 Scene 4: Yay! The speech was finally right and the build-up to the exit was great. Act 2 Scene 9: Get closer to Lizzie and Danny for the show’s final pose.

Wednesday, October 4, 2006: Double rehearsal days are always rough but they inevitably help to remove last minute kinks before the run of a show begins. The afternoon rehearsal sagged a bit trying to work out more technical issues. I did feel that I was able to regain more of the “acting flow” of the show that had been lost over the past couple of days. My notes from the director were to stay in the light (that is now getting set) especially in the cha-cha scene, to laugh at Pam’s “chicken” in the doctor’s office,
and to give Danny a more sincere hug at the end of the show. I did tell Nick that my reason for giving a rather abrupt hug was that he was stretching his line out too long, and I was trying to get him to hurry up. After a two hour dinner break, we came back for our final dress rehearsal.

The evening rehearsal was just what we needed to be ready for opening. Transitions went much smoother (with a few exceptions) and I discovered a new aspect to my character that I really liked. This occurred in the doctor’s office scene (Act 1 Scene 5). Nick gave me a note for the afternoon that I could laugh at Pam, and I decided to use that and approach the other women’s antics with a little more lightness. This allowed me to make an easier transition into joining them. Arlene wasn’t so cold, even though she doesn’t join in fully until her “I Want It All” verse. Secretly allowing Arlene to join in earlier was more fun for me as well. Hopefully these choices will make her easier to identify with for the audience. However at the end of the scene, I was so caught up in the abandonment and energy that all three women were creating together, that I forgot to sing my first harmony on the lyrics “I want it”.

Thinking back to earlier in the show, I accidentally sang “what a baby” instead of “what a journey” at the end of the first song of the show. I suppose it was a Freudian slip. I feel like my opening lines are at the right level of energy now, and that Tim and I are consistently connecting onstage. Overall, the rehearsal went very well for me. The following are the creative staff notes: Choreography notes were minimal. Don’t get to the ending pose of “I Want It All” late. Keep any and all focus changes clear in the opening dance.
Nick’s director notes were also fairly brief. He felt tonight’s dress rehearsal was the best run to date. I agree with this assessment. The second act sagged a bit. If the cast will strive to keep on top of it by really paying attention to what people are saying, we should be able to fix this easily. Act 1 Scene 1: Technical staff will wait for all actors to clear panels before moving them. Act 1 Scene 3: I need to keep a sense of being tired from our (Alan and Arlene’s) run until we start to exercise again at the beginning of the song. Act 1 Scene 4: Be in the light for the cha-cha. Act 1 Scene 5: Don’t put the basketball in front of my face while singing the lyrics “rise up to the heights”. Act 2 Scene 9: Be in the center of the circle for the “Birth Sequence” song. The group’s last focus should be on the new baby. Everyone needs to move to the circle faster after the final lights go down. Nick concluded rehearsal with a hearty “Break a leg tomorrow night everyone!”

Performance Journal

Thursday, October 5, 2006: Opening Night: I arrived earlier tonight to hand out opening night gifts, a major part of this social profession. Energy was generally high among the cast, despite the fact that another member of the ensemble was starting to get sick, and one of the principals was still getting over being sick. There were many good wishes from cast and support staff before the show began.

While I was waiting backstage to go on, it was difficult to gauge how many people were in the audience because they were so quiet. We feared the worst—a tiny house. However when we went out on stage, we were pleasantly surprised that a decent amount of the center section was filled. The crowd was not overly exuberant, but
chuckled and clapped appreciatively throughout. They were appreciative and since I was
told by others in the audience that a large contingent of the non-cast related audience was
gerder, I felt they had a special attachment to Alan and Arlene. Our characters would be
the ones to which they could most readily relate.

Tonight the synthesizer accompaniment seemed odd. It was if the synthesizer
player were suddenly doubling a lot of what Kevin was playing, but playing it wrong.
During my duet with Tim in the second act, the synthesizer accompaniment was so
strange it made the two of us sound like we were singing incorrect rhythms, even though
I know we stayed with the beat. It was a bit disturbing. There were a few little pitch
gremlins that seemed to plague several members of the cast. I had a sour note early in
“Patterns” and once again forgot my harmony at the end of “I Want It All”. However,
this particular gaffe probably wasn’t completely terrible because one of the other
harmony parts sounded a bit sharp. When all was said and done though, we had a really
good show and I hope that as the runs continue, I’ll be able to fine-tune any issues I
discover with Arlene and really “live” each night.

Friday, October 6, 2006: The second night slump was in full effect for tonight’s
show. People’s energy seemed lower and perhaps that caused lapses in memory, and
other strange things to occur. I certainly had my share of interesting moments
(particularly in Act One). In “We Start Today”, I waited too long in the vamp underneath
my lines and had to wait for awhile between the line “No, it was lovely” and the
beginning of the song. I felt like I was having some pitch issues in Scene 3 during “The
Plaza Song” besides having an air bubble in my throat. I need to really listen to the
accompaniment. In Scene 4, Tim and I couldn’t seem to find the light, and I messed up some of our dance steps. We reviewed them at the end of Act one backstage. During the Pam/Lizzie ball passing in Scene 5, the girls didn’t pass the ball as many times as I’m used to, and I had to have Lizzie hand me the ball, utilizing my best “mom” manner. However, I did finally sing my first harmony correctly at the end of “I Want It All”. In Scene 11, I used my granola bar more to accent my displeasure with Ms. Hart, the realtor, which I think worked well. Overall the first act was funky at best. The cast was noticing the audience too much (who were thankfully laughing a lot) and the music seemed very fast.

Act 2 was decidedly better for me, but not necessarily for the rest of the cast. I felt my interpretation of “Patterns” was very strong. Scene 4 (the dinner scene) had a good build-up of energy for me into a realistic emotional outbreak at the end. I did wait a bit longer before my first statement because I still had lettuce in my mouth. It happens. The rest of the cast still struggled with pitch problems throughout the act, making me wonder if the monitors were turned up enough tonight. At any rate, we got through the show and the audience actually gave us a full standing ovation. It was a surprising end to a somewhat treacherous evening.

Saturday, October 7, 2006: Thank goodness for the arrival of the UCF bus tonight. There was a street festival in Downtown Daytona that probably squelched some of our local crowd. If it hadn’t been for the charter bus from Orlando, we would have probably had about eight people. The bad part about having an audience with a lot of people you know in it is having to fight the urge to play to them. You hear one of them
laugh, and you want to laugh, or make things bigger. This phenomenon only nagged at me as I felt the urge to laugh a couple of times with the audience, but didn’t. However, some of my cast mates succumbed to the pressure. They let the presence of friends and faculty make their energy erratic and out of control. One person drew acting moments out even longer than they previously had been held, almost causing musical cues to be late at times. It can be very frustrating to have to deal with the effects of these choices for the rest of the cast.

My personal performance tonight had a much more focused energy than Friday evening. Two things happened with which I was less than thrilled. The first was my delivery of the introductory lines. They contained the same awkward pause as Friday evening. The second was almost not catching the basketball in “I Want It All”. It nearly hit me in the face. However, the rest of the time I really felt like a 43-year old having to make strong choices in her life, to be true to herself.

Since so many students came from UCF tonight, I got many compliments on my performance. While I always appreciate positive comments, perhaps the ones that meant the most were the ones that addressed how I handled Arlene as a person. One colleague told me that I brought so many layers to her and that you could see all the emotions Arlene was struggling with clearly on my face and in my eyes. Another colleague said I even looked the age and moved with the presence of a middle-aged woman. These words of praise are the result of much preparation on my part, the beautiful partnership I share with Tim on stage (and the rest of the cast) every night, and the insights and guidance from a wonderful creative team (director, music/vocal directors, choreographer). This
role really is becoming “living at the heights onstage”. I look forward to new discoveries tomorrow afternoon.

**Sunday, October 8, 2006:** Sundays are notorious for being populated by a decidedly older crowd. This performance was no exception. The lovely part about this was that we did have an audience who had obviously been attracted by word-of-mouth, the ads in the newspaper, or the posters around town. It’s hard to gauge what an older audience is going to find humorous versus the audience we had on Saturday night. I did notice that older audience members tend to identify more with Arlene and Alan, since they are the closest to their ages. This is really encouraging for Tim and me, because we get to share a fantastic energy with them.

With all that said, today’s performance was not particularly momentous. It felt like an even performance, as if I had reached a plateau in my acting. I don’t feel that that is a bad thing; it is just what was. It was a solid performance and free from jitters. Two members of my thesis committee were in attendance. They may not have seen the highest emotional stakes from Arlene (I think they were at a higher level on Saturday) but they did see a solid, well connected performance. I also felt that I made great strides from the time they saw rehearsal, so it was fulfilling in that respect. I look forward to the upcoming week’s performances to see what new things I can discover as the show comes to a close.

**Thursday, October 12, 2006:** I knew tonight’s performance would be a challenge. Not only because the entire cast and crew hadn’t run the show for four days, but because I had been battling a bad sinus/upper respiratory infection since the end of the Sunday
performance. The worst part was that it started attacking my voice on Wednesday and I was concerned that I wouldn’t have any voice to use for singing or speaking for the Thursday show. With a lot of rest (vocal and physical) and the use of home remedies, I arrived for the performance. It wasn’t until tonight, when I knew I wasn’t at peak, that I realized how vocally demanding the role of Arlene is. It requires belting, very high legitimate soprano singing, and legitimate mezzo singing. The speech patterns are lower than my own (which wasn’t as hard since I was congested). The sequence from “The Plaza Song” through the end of “I Want It All” is quite physically demanding with jogging, two costume changes, dancing, and basketball tossing and belting. I tried not to talk much other than being onstage. I felt myself pushing to really connect my acting and overcome my sickness. I didn’t pay attention to the audience; I can’t live in my world onstage if I’m paying attention to theirs. I actually nailed the timing on the opening sequence, something I haven’t done in awhile, probably a result of my hyper-awareness of my physical condition. In the second act, I really paid attention to Tim during our final scene (once again battling a cough) but the scene really affected me. I almost cried which is a major accomplishment for me!

Everybody in the cast seemed to struggle at points tonight. Several other principal actors were still ill as well. Set pieces didn’t get locked down, props got broken. People cracked notes, sang sharp/flat/and places in-between. My parents were in the audience and they said, unless you knew my voice, you couldn’t tell I was sick, which was echoed by our director Nick. Other members of the cast concurred with this statement. Honestly, I felt that all things considered, I had a better show than the
previous Friday performance. I am exhausted, but really appreciate the encouragement of my cast, my family, my directors, and the audience (who were overheard saying how delightful the show was and how much they enjoyed it).

*Friday, October 13, 2006:* Day two of singing while sick. I feel better today, although I still have a lot of phlegm. My voice sounded better during my personal warm-up, so I’m encouraged.

I have to be honest and say that tonight I felt like my performance was far from wonderful. I felt that my voice sounded very weak; I felt like that was distracting me from my acting. But other people didn’t hear it, or said they didn’t. Maybe it was all in my head. The theatre seemed warm tonight and Kevin, our music director, has said when a space is warm the instruments and the singers will be flat. That seemed to be the case tonight, for probably our smallest audience of the entire run.

Because I was battling so much phlegm, I couldn’t seem to get my voice (or ears) to the right place for belting. As a consequence, some portions of the song “Patterns” that I had intended to belt were not belted. According to the Estill method, I utilized a mixture of voice qualities including speech, twang and opera. The opera quality, with a touch of twang, was the dominant quality that came through on sections that would normally have been belted had I been completely healthy. I do not think the audience was particularly aware of these differences. This particular circumstance proved to me that having a strong vocal technique will allow you to use whatever vocal quality is the strongest when you are sick in order to make the best sound.
Perhaps the weirdest moment of the night for me was after “I Want It All”. I felt like I was flat and weak. When I got back to the dressing room with my two co-stars of that scene, one said “Well that song was finally back to where it should be!” I thought I was losing my mind, because I thought we all sounded bad, but maybe it was in my head again. A lot of acting is mind over matter and tomorrow night I resolve that no matter what I will not judge what I’m doing as I go. I will rest my voice, trust the fact that I’m getting better and just go for it.

Saturday, October 14, 2006: I finally let go of the fact that my voice was not going to sound the way it did the first weekend. By doing that and just concentrating on “living” on-stage I felt that I had a much stronger performance. I know that my voice is beginning to sound more like normal. Everyone had a very strong show tonight. It was solid. The spastic energy that has plagued some people was gone and there was a great sense of focus. After the show, the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival respondent spoke to the cast about the show. His comments were overwhelmingly positive, and in any areas about which he had concerns he asked questions and phrased his constructive comments in the most positive light possible. The first time he looked for me in the group to give a personal comment about my performance as Arlene, he looked surprised upon seeing me and said “So young!” I truly felt like I had achieved the goal of this thesis role, to believably portray a woman almost twice my age. It was the best thing he could have said to me. The rest of his talk was inspiring and very accurate in pinpointing the many strengths and occasional areas of concern in the show. I’m
keeping this entry short because I feel that all my previous entries have built to this point. I’m living with my co-stars on stage and that feels great.

Sunday, October 15, 2006: Today marks the end of the run of the show. My voice was virtually back to normal today, other than during Act 1 Sc. 10 where I started to cough and then got choked up and couldn’t breathe. Since that is a moment where you can’t deny what’s happening, that you are coughing, I tried to act through it and I think it seemed to work. Today’s show was not as strong overall as last night’s, but still demonstrated solid work from the majority of the cast. As our music director Debbie put it, people were living in the moment because it was the last time to live it. Possibly when I go back to edit this journal I’ll be able to reflect more on the experience of Baby. Right now, all I can think is that in many ways this may be the hardest that I have ever worked to flesh out a role, and the easiest experience in other ways because of the fantastic directors and actors with whom I was privileged to work. I hope the audiences enjoyed our journey in Baby as much as we did.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Much of the entertainment industry tries to shift society’s focus to the negative aspects of aging. Losses of physical prowess and mental acuity are stressed over the more positive aspects of aging including gaining maturity and growing in personal and communal responsibility. The middle-aged female character in musical theatre frequently serves to counteract this message of decline and lowered value. This character category provides audiences with increasingly stronger, more well-developed, and capable middle age female characters. These women do not mourn the loss of their youth; they celebrate the new opportunities that await them in mid-life. Noted feminist essayist Virginia Woolf felt that, “One of the signs of passing youth is the birth of a sense of fellowship with other human beings as we take our place among them” (Wisdomquotes.com 6).

Many different versions, or types, of the middle age female character exist in musical theatre. This document has endeavored to highlight these types through the description of their common characteristics as evidenced in selected roles. There certainly are more types, combinations of types, variations on type, and roles that can’t be definitively delineated within the middle age female musical theatre character category. However, utilizing types can help to establish patterns of development and identify trends within the musical theatre genre. These types can also serve as a starting point for further research into the writing of musical scores and librettos, as well as the performance of musicals. Above all the types are meant to function as a guide and not as a rule book.
The characters within a musical are written, directed and acted to reflect the experiences of the creators and creative team. In this document the middle-aged female characters of Aunt Eller in *Oklahoma!*; Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!* and Arlene in two different versions of *Baby* were examined. These characters do not simply bear the imprint of the creator’s imaginations. They are the direct product of the pertinent socio-economic events which surrounded the creators themselves, and when applicable, key socio-economic events from the time period in which the show is set. Utilizing this often two-fold socio-economic influence allowed these three characters to reflect and support a changing, and frequently more beneficial, status for women.

Before the concepts illuminated in *Not Quite the Ingénue*... came to fruition, this author had decided to utilize her role in what was then the upcoming graduate-student-focused Fall 2006 musical as the basis of her thesis. Since the second half of the UCF Musical Theatre MFA program is conducted in partnership with Seaside Music Theater, graduate classes and this “as-yet-undetermined production” would take place at the News-Journal Center in Daytona Beach, Florida. Making the decision to perform my thesis role at the beginning of the second academic year of graduate school would allow me adequate time to formulate an accompanying thesis topic and to pursue pre-rehearsal research required for a thesis role.

When the musical *Baby* was selected, I realized I would most likely be cast as one of the older female characters. While this was not my image of an ideal thesis role, I came to realize that playing an older character well would be challenging and could be very rewarding. It would also serve as a beneficial introduction to roles that will,
hopefully, help to further my career in the future. Playing one of the eldest characters in an ensemble show like *Baby* also brought along a certain sense of duty and responsibility. As I brought my persona in-line with that of a forty-three year old woman, I began to see my attitudes take on a decidedly more mature tone—one that may have even served as an example for the cast members playing younger roles. This originally less-than-sought-after role became an amazing one-of-a-kind opportunity.

While trying to develop a believable version of a character almost two decades my senior, this author had to remember that like character type, age is not a single concept nor is it a caricature. Sometimes young actors adopt a surface approach to creating an older character resulting in a shallow portrayal. Unfortunately, their limited life experience inhibits their perceptions of believability when portraying an older character. They (the young actors) “don’t know that they don’t know”. Consequently, young actors would be well advised to talk with and observe a variety of people in the age range of the character(s) that they will be playing. If the storyline includes a significant life event which the young actors have not experienced (in this case pregnancy, marital conflict and/or the empty nest) then the actors must research the event(s).

Having completed the necessary research and observation, this author felt there was a benefit to being a younger actress portraying a middle-aged character. This benefit was to more objectively approach a role in a cohort of which I was not a member. I had no vested interest in the portrayal of a middle-aged woman; therefore, I feel I played it with less bias than a peer of the character would. Perhaps my journals and research will
also help middle-aged actresses to learn things about themselves which they may not as readily pinpoint, since they are currently living their mid-life period.

The middle-aged actress, unlike her younger colleagues, has a set of unique responses to the pivotal socio-economic events of her lifetime. When some of these same events are utilized by a musical’s creators to shape a character, the middle-aged actress already comprehends the resulting impact on the character. Conversely, the younger actress must create a response to these events based solely on research and observation.

An advantage that post middle age actresses bring to the creation of a role like Arlene in *Baby* is that they have been that age. Age studies professor Margaret Morganroth Gullette points out that:

“...what makes playing younger so readily credible (compared with playing older) can only be our culture’s unconscious shared understandings of the default body’s development...[the body] has been younger psychologically and physiologically. ...[the actors] could draw on sense memories”(166).

Middle age actresses playing a peer character also benefit from their age. Gullette’s observation that “having an age consists of no uniform set of age-associated behaviors” (172) means these women don’t have to spend hours observing how to transmit their age to an audience. It is already programmed into their bodies as a default status.

Exploring the development of the middle-aged musical theater female has been an enlightening experience. It is also gratifying that my chosen performance field has been enriched by the contributions of creators, directors, and actors who brought strong middle-aged female characters to the public consciousness. In retrospect this author has learned that a thorough investigation of the influences on the creation of a character and
real world observation of persons sharing the traits of the character can lead to a convincing portrayal, even when the actor is not age appropriately cast. An in-depth approach to creating my thesis role gave me the insight to “become” Arlene. Further, this process helped me to know that approaching a role in any other way would be inadequate.

It will be interesting to observe how middle age female characters in musical theatre continue to develop, especially in the next ten to fifteen years when I will join the ranks of middle-aged women. If I have the opportunity to play the role of Arlene again in the near future or when I reach middle age, I will endeavor to utilize the process I’ve detailed in this study. However, I would hope that I would perform even more research prior to and concurrent with rehearsing and performing the role since this information is invaluable to an accurate and believable portrayal. It will be worthwhile to note whether the observations made as a twenty-four year old actress will coincide with my life experiences and approach to the character as a peer. If the character type’s development thus far is any indicator of future trends, the corresponding roles will continue to be of significance, and possibly even surpass the primacy of the ingénue within the whole musical theatre genre.
APPENDIX A: BREAKDOWN OF BABY SCENE-BY-SCENE
Table 1: Breakdown of ‘Baby’ Scene-by-Scene

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Dialogue (D)</th>
<th>Description of Action</th>
<th>Function of Dialogue/Song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny, Alan, Arlene, Pam, Nick, Ensemble</td>
<td>“We Start Today”-S (Mostly sung with some expository dialogue interspersed)</td>
<td>Introduction of characters. Lizzie/Danny are college kids just moving in together. Alan is a college administrator, and he and his wife Arlene have just returned from their 20th anniversary celebration. Pam/Nick are 30-something college coaches trying to conceive. At the end of the piece each woman is informed of her pregnancy.</td>
<td>-Plot Development -Conflict Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny</td>
<td>“You really think we can handle it?”-D</td>
<td>Lizzie and Danny wrestle with the decision to keep their baby. They also discover they have fundamental differences on the issue of marriage. Danny believes in it; Lizzie is opposed to it.</td>
<td>-Character Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
<td>Description of Action</td>
<td>Function of Dialogue/Song</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Cont.</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny</td>
<td>“What Could Be Better”-S</td>
<td>The couple imagines what their baby might look like. Ultimately they decide to keep the baby, but not to get married. Danny is not really okay with the decision not to get married.</td>
<td>-Some Character Development -Plot Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“Well. Well”-D</td>
<td>Reveals that Arlene has now been pregnant for a month.</td>
<td>-Plot Development</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“The Plaza Song”-S</td>
<td>Alan and Arlene try to figure out how their plans for a romantic anniversary weekend went awry. Song takes place while couple is attempting to work out to get back into shape. By end of the song Alan has come to acceptance and joy about the pregnancy. Arlene is simply more conflicted.</td>
<td>-Plot &amp; Character Development (Alan) -Character Insight (Arlene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
<td>Description of Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Three Cont.</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“Arlene, this house isn’t too big.”-D</td>
<td>Alan wants to keep the baby and have another family. Arlene is hesitant as he tries to sweet talk her.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Alan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Pam, Nick</td>
<td>“Good little bed.”-D</td>
<td>Pam and Nick revel in the joy of their success in conceiving together. Pam begins to worry slightly about her ability to be a parent.</td>
<td>-Character Insight (Pam)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“Baby, Baby, Baby”-S (1st Part)</td>
<td>Nick sings to his baby and both parents-to-be sing of the love with which they will shower the child.</td>
<td>-Informative but doesn’t develop plot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“I don’t believe you remember this.”-D (“Baby. . .(S) cont.)</td>
<td>Alan is trying to convince Arlene that having a baby will be wonderful and different from their past experiences.</td>
<td>-Character Insight (Alan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
<td>Description of Action</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Pam, Nick, Alan, Arlene, Lizzie, Danny</td>
<td>“Baby, Baby, Baby”-S (2\textsuperscript{nd} Part)</td>
<td>All three couples consider their new or renewed roles as parents.</td>
<td>-Character Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cont.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Ensemble</td>
<td>“Mid-term Transition”-S</td>
<td>Ensemble helps the audience to perceive the passage of time. Women of ensemble comment unfavorably on Lizzie’s choice to keep her baby.</td>
<td>-Transitional Material</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Lizzie, Pam, Arlene, Nurse</td>
<td>“My basketball team just gave me a baby shower.”-D</td>
<td>P. eagerly talks with other ladies in the waiting room of the OB-GYN’s office. The women discover they “know” each other in some way. L. shares her plan for how to handle pregnancy. A. shares some information about babies.</td>
<td>-Character Development</td>
</tr>
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<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-Plot Development (More Expository Material)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
<td>Song (S)</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Five B</td>
<td>Pam, Lizzie, Arlene</td>
<td>“I Want It All”-S</td>
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<td>Each woman sings in turn about how she wants everything life has to provide, love, career, kids, etc. Arlene becomes swept up in enthusiasm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Danny, Nick, Nurse, Pam</td>
<td>“Women!”-D into “At Night She Comes Home to Me”-S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Danny tells Nick, his track coach, of his frustrations with Lizzie’s refusal of marriage. Nick assures Danny that women may be complicated, but they need to be free to do what they need to do and rely on their significant other to support them.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pam, Nick</td>
<td>“I’m not.”-D</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pam tells Nick that her positive pregnancy test result was a mistake.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act</td>
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<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny</td>
<td>“Okay, Liz, this is it.”-D into “What Could Be Better-Reprise”-S</td>
<td>Danny tries to make a marriage decision for Lizzie. She convinces him not to propose but does allow him more opportunity to take care of his “family”. Danny decides to take a summer touring music job to make money.</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>Eight A</td>
<td>Ensemble</td>
<td>“Term Paper Transition”-S</td>
<td>Ensemble once again sings about passage of time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Eight B</td>
<td>Pam, Nick, Doctor</td>
<td>“I knew it!”-D</td>
<td>Couple visits reproductive specialist. P. blames self for situation. Contact lens preoccupied doctor says that N. has the fertility problem. They decide to try conception techniques to increase conception chances. Doctor warns their marriage will be tested.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Function of Dialogue/Song**

- Plot Development
- Transitional Material
- Plot & Character Development (Pam)
- Character Insight (Nick)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Dialogue (D)</th>
<th>Description of Action</th>
<th>Function of Dialogue/Song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Nick, Alan, Weiss, Webber &amp; Danny</td>
<td>“Come on. Where’s the team?”-D</td>
<td>Professors and faculty from the college are assembling for a faculty softball game where they are sure to lose due to weakened numbers. Weiss tries to comfort an agitated Nick about his conception woes, mistaking the problem as Pam’s. Danny runs into the scene to inform his coach of his decision to join the touring band and become a “responsible father”.</td>
<td>-Expository Material -Character Insight (Nick) -Presentational Material</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“The Fatherhood Blues”-S</td>
<td>All the men try to warn and encourage Danny about the woes and joys of fatherhood.</td>
<td>-Presentational Material</td>
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<td>Act</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Characters</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“Hear that hum?”-D</td>
<td>Scene begins with Arlene planning to seduce her husband. Later, Arlene broaches the subject of terminating the pregnancy with Alan. She wants to enjoy the “empty nest”. Alan agrees to the decision to terminate the pregnancy, then quickly changes the subject.</td>
<td>-Plot Development</td>
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<td>-Character Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Arlene)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Character Insight (Alan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Danny, Lizzie</td>
<td>“Ten Minutes!”-D</td>
<td>Lizzie trying to get Danny to acknowledge their quickly approaching separation.</td>
<td>-Plot Development</td>
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<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nick, Pam</td>
<td>“What happened to you today?”-D</td>
<td>Both Nick and Pam try to surprise one another to raise each other’s spirits after their bleak reproductive prognosis. Both are ready to start trying again.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Mr./Ms. Hart, Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“Well we certainly can’t list that . . .”-D</td>
<td>Alan and Arlene show their house to a less than enthusiastic realtor. Arlene gets very frustrated with both the realtor and her husband.</td>
<td>-Presentational Material</td>
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<td>Cont.</td>
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<td>-Character Development</td>
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<td>(Arlene)</td>
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<td>Pam, Nick</td>
<td>“How do you like it?”-D into “Romance #1”-S</td>
<td>Pam and Nick read through the rules they have to follow for sex.</td>
<td>-Presentational Material</td>
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<td>-Character Development</td>
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<td>Lizzie, Danny</td>
<td>“Five minutes!”-D</td>
<td>Lizzie is still trying to get Danny’s acknowledgment of their upcoming separation. Danny has been thinking about it and proposes to Lizzie without her having to accept.</td>
<td>-Plot Development</td>
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<td>-Character Development</td>
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<td>(Danny)</td>
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<td>Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Danny (Lizzie)</td>
<td>“I Know I Chose Right”-S</td>
<td>Danny serenades Lizzie with his thoughts on true love and commitment and his role in Lizzie’s life.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Danny)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>Mr./Ms. Hart, Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“I don’t think we’ll get away with. . .”-D</td>
<td>Realtor continues to downgrade the MacNalley’s home. Arlene takes matters into her own hands to get rid of the realtor by telling here about the couple’s pregnancy and the need for the house for the family. Alan is amazed but pleased at her decision.</td>
<td>-Plot Development (Arlene)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ensemble</td>
<td>“Commencement Chorale”-S</td>
<td>Ensemble marks end of the school year by reprising the opening theme in the form of a commencement hymn.</td>
<td>-Transitional Material</td>
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<td>Act</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>Lizzie</td>
<td>“It moved!”-D into “The Story Goes On”-S</td>
<td>Lizzie feels the baby move for the first time and can’t get in touch with anyone to share her news. During the song she realized that she is a part of the never-ending chain of life and it fills her with wonder.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Lizzie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Lizzie, Women of the Ensemble</td>
<td>“Dear Danny, summer’s almost over”-D into “The Ladies Singing Their Song”-S</td>
<td>Lizzie is writing to Danny about her experiences with other women who want to share all the pregnancy knowledge. At first she interprets their concerns as an annoyance but then realizes they are just excited, and she’ll be like them one day too.</td>
<td>-Presentational Material -Some Character Development (Lizzie)</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Arlene</td>
<td>“Patterns”-S</td>
<td>Arlene examines the choices she has made in life realizing that she frequently makes decisions out of habit instead of doing what she really wants to do. By the end of the song she realizes she must make some changes in her life.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Arlene)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Nick, Pam</td>
<td>“Chapter 26. .Honey, your legs.”-D into “Romance #2”-S</td>
<td>The toll of trying for a baby in a regimented manner is beginning to show in Nick and Pam’s relationship. Couple is passing the time by reading until they can have their regulated sex.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Three Cont.</td>
<td>Nick, Pam</td>
<td>“The white whale . . . What’s so funny?”-D</td>
<td>Pam and Nick are still trying to follow the rules for conception, but Pam is at her wit’s end. She and Nick get into a fight about the whole process and whether it is worth the work and strain to have a baby. Nick thinks it is, Pam is beginning to doubt it.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
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<td>“Romance #3”-S</td>
<td>Pam rejects the strict rules that have been governing her love life with her husband. She sees that her relationship with her husband is beginning to suffer, and she doesn’t want to lose that. Nick enters at the end of the song and says they are not going to try to conceive this way anymore.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Pam) -Plot Development</td>
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<td>Song (S)</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“More salad?”-D</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan is trying to do everything he knows to do to be a good husband and father. Arlene shares with him that they have lost something in their marriage and that after their child is born, their relationship may become non-existent.</td>
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<td>Alan</td>
<td>“Easier to Love”-S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan contrasts his children’s blind devotion with the relationship he must earn and maintain with his wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Ensemble</td>
<td>“Registration Transition”-S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensemble tells the audience that it is fall, and a new school year is beginning.</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny</td>
<td>“Tah dum!”-D</td>
<td>Danny returns from his touring job. The couple has different expectations about what will happen now that they are reunited. Lizzie wants to celebrate, Danny wants to rest. They spend some time teasing one another. Lizzie has decided to marry Danny and wants to be sure that they create a love that will last.</td>
<td>-Plot Development -Character Development (Lizzie)</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny, (Ensemble)</td>
<td>“Two People in Love”-S</td>
<td>The couple sings about the joy of their love and the life challenges they will face together, including the birth of their child. Ensemble sings accompaniment offstage.</td>
<td>-Presentational Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“Hello?”-D</td>
<td>Alan asks Arlene, via phone, to have a family meeting.</td>
<td>-Plot Development</td>
</tr>
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<td>Act</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Dialogue (D)</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Nick, Pam</td>
<td>“How about some music?”-D</td>
<td>Pam and Nick try to figure out how to deal with one another after Nick has an episode of impotence. The couple argues about their relationship and continuing to try to conceive. They decide that they can’t throw away their relationship over trying to conceive.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Both) -Plot Development</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>“With You”-S</td>
<td>Pam tells Nick about all he has given her in their relationship. Nick reciprocates the sentiments. The couple realizes that they are enough for one another now.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“In twenty year, we have never...”-D</td>
<td>Alan tries to tell Arlene that he has not put their relationship first. Arlene admits that their unborn baby was an escape for her from focusing on them as a couple.</td>
<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
</tr>
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127
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<th>Act</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Dialogue (D)</th>
<th>Description of Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Eight Cont.</td>
<td>Alan, Arlene</td>
<td>“And What If We Had Loved Like That?”-S</td>
<td>Both people realize that they lost track of each other in their marriage because they were too busy doing what they were “supposed” to do. By the end of the song they realize they want to still try to make their marriage work and give themselves a new start.</td>
<td>-Plot Development</td>
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<td>-Character Development (Both)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Lizzie, Danny, Nick, Pam, Alan, Arlene, (Ensemble offstage)</td>
<td>“For nine months. . .”-D interspersed with “Birth Sequence”-S</td>
<td>Lizzie begins to go into early labor. Nick and Pam decide to continue trying for a child in their own way. Alan and Arlene acknowledge each other as lovers not just parents. Scene moves into Lizzie giving birth and all the couple gathered in the hospital to welcome Lizzie and Danny’s baby.</td>
<td>-Denouement and Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: PRODUCTION PHOTOS FROM BABY
Figure 1: Arlene and Alan return from their 20th anniversary getaway - Act 1, Scene 1

Figure 2: Full cast singing "We Start Today" - Act 1, Scene 1
Figure 3: Three couples learn of their pregnancies- Act 1, Scene 1

Figure 4: The MacNalleys considering their pregnancy- Act 1, Scene 3
Figure 5: Alan and Arlene singing “The Plaza Song”- Act 1, Scene 3

Figure 6: Dancing and reminiscing about child-rearing- Act 1, Scene 4
Figure 7: The three principal couples singing "Baby, Baby, Baby" - Act 1, Scene 4

Figure 8: Impatiently waiting for the OB/GYN - Act 1, Scene 5B
Figure 9: The women making small talk in the waiting room- Act 1, Scene 5B

Figure 10: "Oh look. Six months." Arlene shares parenting advice- Act 1, Scene 5B
Figure 11: The ladies sing "I Want It All" - Act 1, Scene 5B

Figure 12: "Alan, do we really want this child?" - Act 1, Scene 10
Figure 13: Arlene explains her doubt about the pregnancy - Act 1, Scene 10

Figure 14: Arlene tells the realtor she is pregnant - Act 1, Scene 11
Figure 15: "We're going to have a baby!"- Act 1, Scene 11

Figure 16: Arlene evaluates her life choices- Act 2, Scene 2
Figure 17: Arlene sings "Patterns" - Act 2, Scene 2

Figure 18: Arlene wonders if she's made a mistake - Act 2, Scene 2
Figure 21: A family conference - Act 2, Scene 8

Figure 22: "What If We Could Love Like That?" - Act 2, Scene 8
Figure 23: Danny & Lizzie, Pam & Nick, Arlene & Alan- Act 2, Scene 9

Figure 24: The cast gathers at the hospital- Act 2, Scene 9
Figure 25: The story goes on- Act 2, Scene 10
APPENDIX C: CORRELATION OF THESIS AND GRADUATE WORK
The following material was originally created as a PowerPoint presentation for use during the defense of this thesis document. It is being included in the thesis document at the request of the thesis committee. The presentation has been modified from its original interactive format. Photographs used in the presentation were selected to show additional scenes from either rehearsal or performance of Baby. They were not necessarily intended to reinforce the material on the screen in which they appeared.
Thesis Summary

- *Not Quite the Ingénue.* is an exploration of the influences which have defined the function of middle-aged female characters within the musical theatre genre.
- The document provides the reader with a working definition of middle age. It also furnishes a sampling of types, or stereotypes, of middle age female characters in musicals.
The major thrust of the document emphasizes researching and understanding the importance of key socio-economic events’ influence on the creation, direction, or depiction of middle-aged female characters.

Three distinct characters are used to develop this theory, Aunt Eller in Oklahoma!, Dolly Levi in Hello, Dolly! and the author’s chosen thesis role, Arlene MacNailey in Baby.

Further analysis within the thesis details essential differences between the original version of Arlene and the updated 2006 version of Arlene portrayed in the University of Central Florida’s production of Baby.
• Completing a thesis involves more than choosing a topic, selecting a committee, and doing research and writing; rather, it is the culmination of the whole graduate school experience.

• Each of my classes, interactions with faculty and fellow students, and my various academic and performance opportunities are represented in some way in the document.

• This presentation will highlight concepts from each of my graduate classes during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years and how they were utilized in either the research, rehearsal, performance or writing of the thesis.
Graduate Acting I
Be Boyd

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Learning how to “live in the moment” and not force actions/emotions that do not occur organically, based upon the action of the scene
  - Working collaboratively with an engaged acting partner

- Thesis Application
  - Chronicling the process of organic moments that occurred during the production of Baby through rehearsal and performance journals
  - Working with Tim Ellis to create a believable married couple in the production of Baby (achieved through backstory discussion and trying various acting choices during rehearsals)
Musical Theatre Voice I
Dr. Steven Chicurel

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Estill Voice Training System teaches conscious control of the vocal mechanisms
  - Control allows the singer to easily access the six different voice qualities: Speech, Falsetto, Sob, Twang, Opera and Belt.

- Thesis Application
  - During the second week of the run of Baby, I became ill. I relied on the knowledge and skill developed with the six different voice qualities to combine different qualities that would sound similar to the single quality used when healthy. In the song “Patterns” I substituted Opera with Twang and Speech qualities mixed in to closely imitate the Belt quality used for the song when I was not ill.
Research Methods
Dr. Julia Listengarten

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Learning how to efficiently utilize the UCF library system for higher level research
  - Research lens- filtering and interpreting research through a particular viewpoint

- Thesis Application
  - Used UCF library and library website to obtain print and online sources
  - Used a socio-economic historical lens to research and analyze my chosen thesis topic
Musical Theatre History

Earl Weaver

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Examining the development of musical theatre as an American art form
  - Learning about lesser known musical theatre roles, productions, performers, collaborators and their unique contributions

- Thesis Application
  - Researching aspects of seven decades of musical theatre history
  - Using a lesser known role like Arlene in *Baby* to help highlight the development of the middle-aged female character in the musical theatre genre
Second Semester Courses
Graduate Acting II
J.J. Ruscella

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Tablework-importance of fully exploring the “unwritten” portions of a show and character
  - Immersing oneself in all aspects of a role

- Thesis Application
  - Discussing the respective life journeys of Arlene and Alan before Baby rehearsals, and subsequently making discoveries about their relationship based upon acting choices made during rehearsals
  - Went to the mall on free time wearing pregnancy attire to “be a pregnant woman”, observed middle-aged people, arranged birth center tour and birth education class for the principal actors
Musical Theatre Dance I
Brian Vernon

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Importance of observation before trying to participate
  - Since I had a broken toe and couldn’t dance during the majority of the class, I also learned how to grow and make changes by watching others perform, and by writing down the routines taught in class

- Thesis Application
  - Did not try to imitate middle age or pregnancy specific motions without “real world” observation
  - Refined my character during rehearsal and performance by responding to other actors’ concepts of their own characters as well as to their concepts of Arlene
Musical Theatre Voice II
Dr. Steven Chicurel

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Exploring technical elements of music/lyrics which can be finessed to help achieve performance artistry

- Thesis Application
  - Using suggestions of director and music director during rehearsals to fix technical issues (i.e. diction, rhythmic accuracy) which then allowed me to concentrate on effective artistic communication as the character when I was singing
Theatre Careers

Ellen Jones

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Seeking out and being open to various artistic opportunities
  - Writing business letters and setting up meetings with artistic professionals

- Thesis Application
  - Using the opportunity to portray a middle-aged character as a vehicle to explore a character type that has been largely overlooked by musical theatre historians
  - Wrote business e-mail correspondence and coordinated meetings with birthing center nurse Susan Bekken on behalf of the cast of *Baby*
First Summer Term
Seaside Music Theater- Daytona Beach, Florida
A Year with Frog and Toad, Jesus Christ Superstar, Singin’ in the Rain

- Internship Concepts and/or Applications
  - Learning how to more effectively multi-task, through simultaneous rehearsal/performance periods

- Thesis Application
  - Balancing rehearsal time, research, “outside rehearsal” character exploration with a full class schedule and accompanying workload
Third Semester
Musical Theatre Acting I
Nicholas Wuehrmann

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Performing a song numerous times with different interpretations to discover the most effective combinations for a final performance
  - Created character and story outlines for a new musical, *Jimmy*, with classmates and UCF composer-in-residence Richard Pearson Thomas

- Thesis Application
  - In rehearsal Arlene's solo, "Patterns", was approached with many different acting choices by this actor. Additional adjustments were made at the request of the director
  - Creative process of synthesizing many people's ideas into one unified theme in *Jimmy* corresponded to synthesis and utilization of research sources which supported my thesis theme
Musical Theatre Voice III
Nicholas Wuehrmann

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Wrote song papers that required research into performance history of the studied piece and its show of origination
  - Papers also required a critical analysis of the song’s function and the motives of the character singing it

- Thesis Application
  - Researched and wrote about production history of Baby, as well as aspects of the production histories of Oklahoma! and Hello, Dolly!
  - Made a thorough analysis of Arlene’s actions within the context of the musical, especially in relation to key socio-economic historic events of “her” lifetime
Musical Theatre Dance III
Gary Flannery

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Importance of establishing a routine to help strengthen performance

- Thesis Application
  - Went through a mental/physical warm-up before each rehearsal and performance
Script and Score Analysis
Dr. Steven Chicurel

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Researching and evaluating all aspects of the creative process involved in creating a musical
  - Creating a detailed analysis of the script and score of a musical to aid in performance

- Thesis Application
  - Researched and wrote about outside influences on the creators of Baby
  - Wrote a detailed script and score analysis of Baby in Chapter 4 and Appendix A of the document
Master Class
Julia Truilo, Lester Malizia, Gary Flannery

- **Class Concept and/or Class Application**
  - Identification of viable roles within the musical theatre world appropriate to our skills
  - Worked on tailoring auditions to obtain those roles

- **Thesis Application**
  - Identified and used personal performance skills which were best suited to portraying Arlene, a character two decades older than my own life experience
Fourth Semester
Musical Theatre Acting II
Nicholas Wuehrmann

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Creating more vivid presentations of musical theatre scenes by using contemporary actions to find the key moments in classic scenes, or vice versa
  - Rehearsing and performing the new musical *Jimmy* in Florida and New York City

- Thesis Application
  - Translated this to the research portion of the thesis document—utilizing historic events to define classic and contemporary characters (i.e. an 1890’s woman being defined by the events of the 1940’s, or a 1980’s woman being defined by the events of the 1950’s-1970’s)
  - The nature of developing and revising a new musical translated to the need to assess the construction of the thesis document, and determine if its message will be clear to future readers
Musical Theatre Voice IV
Nicholas Wuehrmann

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Components of an effective cabaret act
  - Created and performed a cabaret act which included selecting/arranging material, writing dialogue, and marketing the show.

- Thesis Application
  - Used the same skills necessary to create and elaborate upon a clear cabaret theme to methodically organize my research and prioritize the writing of the thesis document
Musical Theatre Dance IV
Gary Flannery

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - The importance of flexibility in approaching a subject
  - We learned about dance not just through performance, but through historical videos and discussions of the professional world as well

- Thesis Application
  - Relied on a sense of flexibility to approach editing the thesis document with a desire to further clarify my ideas
  - Learned about the subjects presented in the thesis document through a variety of sources
Directing for Musical Theatre
Nicholas Wuehrmann

- Class Concept and/or Class Application
  - Understanding the many elements involved in a director’s vision and creation of a production
  - Created an extensive director’s book containing historical research as well as unique interpretation of an existing show

- Thesis Application
  - Helped me to identify a director’s influence on the portrayal of a character (i.e. Gower Champion’s influence on Dolly in *Hello, Dolly!*)
  - Research and synthesis abilities used throughout the document writing process
Second Summer Term
Seaside Music Theater-Daytona Beach, Florida
Mama Maddalena in *Nine*

- Internship Concepts and/or Applications
  - Necessity of effective communication and creating workable timetables

- Thesis Application
  - Helped me decide to create a PowerPoint presentation to more clearly define my graduate school and thesis experience for the purposes of this thesis defense
Additional Pictures from *Baby*
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174


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