Subversive movement: destabilising genre expectations and audience responses using musical theatre dance.

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This dissertation is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Ellin Sears
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Abstract

Musical theatre dance, also known as show dance, is a widely accepted convention of the musical theatre genre. Despite its central role in musical theatre, historically show dance has been marginalised in critical theory and analysis. The development of the integrated musical in the mid-twentieth century has aided in changing critical dialogues surrounding show dance. However, the theoretical frameworks that have developed out of the integrated tradition are imprecise and ill-equipped to deal with all permutations of the modern musical and the ways in which dance functions within them. Scott McMillin’s theories of doubled time and the cohesive musical, and Millie Taylor’s discussions of loss and excess challenge the argument that song and dance should always aim to be integrated into the narrative. By considering the potentially disjunctive or disruptive functions of song and dance, these analyses consider the varied theatrical effects that might be created for an audience engaging with the musical form. My research uses a multi-modal approach, drawing insights from theories of audience reception, performance, genre, semiotics and culture, to interrogate the interplay of theory and praxis in the musical form, and particularly the way show dance can function to subvert audience expectations in exploring challenging themes and narratives. The exegesis traces my research journey and concludes in the documentation of my new creative artefact; an original musical inspired by George Orwell’s dystopian classic, Nineteen Eighty-Four. Co-developed with lyricist and fellow researcher Sarah Courtis, the choreography and movement in 2084: A Musical was crafted as a platform to engage with audience responses to musical theatre dance, which specifically works to illustrate themes of subjugation, conflict, and control. Further, my analysis of 2084 considers the relationship between audience pleasure and entertainment, expectations regarding genre and performance, the important visual role of dance within the stage musical, and how juxtaposition can be used as a powerful dramatic tool, creating complex and dynamic performance texts for an audience.
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EXEGESIS

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

This chapter is split into two sections, a discussion of my own autoethnographic framing which has been an ongoing influence on my research and praxis, and an introduction to the academic field of musical theatre dance.

1.1 Fame and isolation: an autoethnographic frame

Growing up as a dancer in Australia in the 1990s, I was exposed to a steady stream of Disney movies and classic showtunes from a young age. By the time I was a pre-teen I was reasonably well versed in the genre and its music, but I had yet to see a professional, live musical. Big name shows took a long time to tour to my hometown of Perth – if they came at all. *The Phantom of the Opera* premiered in Melbourne in 1990, but the Australian tour that began in 1993 didn’t make it to Perth until 1998 – more than a decade after its premiere on the West End. When I discovered that *Phantom* was finally coming to my hometown, I was tremendously excited. I had already appropriated my mother’s Andrew Lloyd Webber compilation CDs, and the songs from *Phantom* were among my favourites. I’m sure you can imagine my horror when I discovered that nobody had thought to purchase me a ticket. My family had not even dreamed that I might want to see it. After all, I was only nine years old, and the tickets were expensive. At the time I was devastated, but the payoff for this early disappointment would be more important than I could ever dream. My mother decided to make up for not being able to take me to see *Phantom* by surprising me with tickets to see the next big touring show that came to town.

In 1999 the first professional Australian production of *Fame* (1988) came to Perth, almost a decade after it first opened in Miami. The tickets were an early surprise gift for my eleventh birthday and I distinctly remember the day my mother and I went to the theatre together, seeing the advertising banners strung up outside and realising what we were there for. I was extremely excited, despite having little to no context or pre-existing knowledge of the show. Overall, I enjoyed the singing and dancing immensely, while also feeling more than a little awkward and self-conscious about the coarse language, the sexual content, and Carmen’s drug abuse. However, it was a specific choreographic moment that resonated most with me as an audience member. In act two, Tyrone has been
embarrassed in front of his peers by English teacher Miss Sherman who asks him to read out loud in front of the class. He accuses her of trying to make him look stupid and the two engage in a heated argument that results in Miss Sherman slapping him and storming off. Tyrone insists that his performing talents are all he needs to get by in life and performs the fantasy sequence ‘Dancin’ on the Sidewalk’. In the official synopsis for *Fame*, the number closes with the following actions: “Confronting his pain and frustration, Tyrone goes to the blackboard, writes ‘I Will Read’ and runs off” (The Guide to Musical Theatre, 2018).

Although I was unable to recall the name of the song or more than a hazy approximation of the rest of the choreography, for years afterwards I remembered the visual and emotional impact that this scene had on me as an audience member. While the number might begin as a triumphant exploration of his greatest strength, deep down Tyrone knows that no matter how good he is at dancing, his poor academic skills are holding him back. As the number drew to its conclusion, the energetic ensemble members melted away, the lighting shifted and the music faded into awkward, ringing silence. Tyrone was left onstage, alone. His movements became more and more desperate, flinging his body around the stage, the actor gasping with tears. The defiant front was shattered, and instead I saw his doubts and frustrations laid bare – manifested through the disruption of one of the few talents this character was naturally gifted in – his dancing.

I include this anecdote here because it illustrates two important aspects of my research. Even as a child who had little theoretical or academic understanding of the codes and conventions of musical theatre dance, I was still able to identify that ‘Dancin’ on the Sidewalk’ not only subverted my expectations as an audience member. Further, this sequence created such an impact on my eleven-year-old self that it would shape my engagement with every other musical theatre text from thereon. Keir Elam suggests that an understanding of dramatic representation can be traced back to infancy, where exposure to games and children’s media help to frame understanding of other forms of media (Elam, 1980, p. 57), and I would argue that this only increases as we grow older and consume more media. This leads me to my second point, which is that this exegesis will be best understood if the reader is aware of my personal or autoethnographical
relationship with musical theatre and its dance. This accounts for my personal connection to this number, which ultimately deepened my understanding of the theatrical capabilities of musical theatre dance and how it could be used to portray negatively coded emotions to an audience. It also accounts for other autoethnographical factors which have doubtless shaped my research, including the relative geographical isolation of my upbringing (which has affected my exposure to musical theatre texts) and the roles I have taken on as choreographer, performer, audience member, and now as a researcher.

To discount the influence of my personal connection to the musical genre, including the nostalgia I have for the first live show that truly captured my imagination, is to ignore an important element of my research journey and my broader understanding of musical theatre and its dance. In the more than twenty years since I saw *Fame*, my interest in dance that disrupts or unsettles the audience within the musical has only grown. It is a convention that I have seen utilised to brilliant theatrical effect, destabilising audience expectations by the disruption of traditional expectations about musical theatre and its dance. In later chapters I will be covering this phenomenon in more detail, supporting my argument that dance which disrupts audience expectations is just as important to the historic development of musical theatre dance as integrated or narrative-driven choreography from the golden age. Further, I posit that the role of dance as a form of meaning-making within the musical is a complex field of study that has only recently begun to receive the kind of academic attention it has been lacking for much of its history. My research expands on ideas already developed by other scholars within the field, with a particular focus on dance as a disruptive, and possibly disjunctive force.

1.2 Introduction

In order to begin interrogating this field, I would like to first pose a question: what is the very first thing that comes to mind when somebody mentions musical theatre dance? For some it might be the image of beautiful show girls singing and dancing in skimpy costumes. Others might think of the kaleidoscopic film work of Busby Berkeley, of Fred Astaire waltzing Ginger Rogers into his heart or Gene Kelly tap dancing on roller skates. Then of course there are the narrative led dances of the integrated musical like Agnes de Mille’s pioneering dream ballet in
Oklahoma! or the clashes between the Sharks and Jets in West Side Story. From a more contemporary lens one might consider the sensual gyrations of Bob Fosse, or Michael Bennett's pioneering work on concept musicals from Company to A Chorus Line.

In this contemporary moment, musical theatre dance has the capacity to perform a wide array of functions within the live musical form, as evidenced by the fascinating breadth of new works being produced every year on a global scale. Even within the short years of my doctoral candidature I have seen musicals with movement idioms that included: American Sign Language, hybridised dance styles, elements of physical theatre, and audience immersion, as well as traditional precision dance styles reimagined for the contemporary stage. While there are still leggy showgirls and athletic song and dance men to be found, there is also greater diversity in musical theatre than ever before, not just in performers, but also in the character and narratives that are being explored. There is also greater diversity in the academic sphere, where show dance is slowly being removed from dated cultural perceptions that it is little more than an aesthetic embellishment (Harris, 2016, p. 98), or an artistic afterthought usually incorporated towards the end of the creative process. Indeed, more and more contemporary scholars are exploring the often complex and thrilling effects that dance can create within the context of a musical, and particularly how audiences read and respond to musical theatre dance.

My research interest, as indicated in the first half of this chapter, is in the subversion or reframing of traditional show dance conventions to create dramatic effects for modern audiences. With over a hundred years of heritage to draw on, and audiences that are becoming increasingly literate in the language of musical theatre dance and the musical, there are a multitude of theatrical effects that can be achieved through the synthesis of music, drama, and dance within the musical. Discourse within this area is steadily moving away from a discussion of the musical as an integrated artform (or at least as a genre that has often strived towards integration), and instead as a dialectical form of theatre that is constantly negotiating the boundaries between artistic cohesion and the inherently disruptive nature of the shift between book and number. This allows analysis of

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1 See also my discussion of (Woolford, 2012), (Cuden, 2013), and (Viertal, 2016) in Chapter Two.
a broader range of works, considering not only the conventions of song, dance, and drama, but also how specific elements might be deliberately juxtaposed against each other to create meaning for an audience. Combining current theories of musical theatre dance with choreographic practice, the written exegesis that follows has been written to elucidate the research journey I have undertaken throughout my doctoral candidature, including the relationship between my traditional academic research and my creative praxis. Presented in two parts, my research consists of a written exegesis and a creative artefact entitled \textit{2084: A Musical} (2016)\textsuperscript{2}.

My traditional academic research draws primarily on the work of Scott McMillin and Millie Taylor. McMillin’s concept of the cohesive musical suggests that a certain degree of disruption is accepted as an integral part of the musical genre, while Taylor’s discussion of excess and loss in relation to song and dance, particularly her discussion of camp, have both been integral to my work. My research has also been strongly influenced by audience reception theory, a growing area within the field of musical theatre studies which aims to understand how musical texts work to entertain audiences on a global scale\textsuperscript{3}. By considering the musical not only as an artform, but also as a commercial entity aligned with pleasure and entertainment, scholars are moving away from purely text-based dramatic analysis and instead towards multi-modal analysis that engages with the numerous ways in which audiences read and respond to musical theatre. This aligns more closely with my own interest in musical theatre dance, a convention that resists traditional textual and structural analysis due to its inherently physical nature.

My creative praxis is the result of an artistic collaboration between myself and fellow doctoral candidate Sarah Courtis, whose own research considers the lyric in musical theatre. Both the workshop and final productions of \textit{2084} were co-developed in conjunction with Sarah over the course of our respective candidatures. Although I did contribute to the script, as well as to the ongoing development of the characters and narrative, the examinable component of the creative artefact for my own research pertains specifically to the choreography in

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\textsuperscript{2} Although the production is officially titled \textit{2084: A Musical} it will hereafter be referred to predominantly by its shortened title \textit{2084}.

\textsuperscript{3} See: (McMillin, 2006), (Taylor, 2012), (Taylor & Symonds, 2014), (Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016), (Gardner, 2016).
the completed creative artefact, as well as to specific elements of the direction and staged movement which I will discuss in more detail in my praxis chapter and in my annotated copy of the final script.

The exegesis that follows comprises of the following chapters:

- **Chapter Two: Literature Review and Methodology.** The first half of this chapter contains a review of the literature, identifying key trends within the field and some of the challenges currently being faced by researchers. The latter half involves a discussion of methodological frames and terms, namely my use of multi-modal analysis and my attempts to bridge the divide between theory and practice. This includes a consideration of auto-ethnography, Nelson’s modes of practice as research, as well as Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean’s iterative cyclic web, and how my understanding of these frameworks have shaped and influenced my research journey.

- **Chapter Three: Historical Contexts.** This chapter provides a frame of reference for my own understanding of show dance as a genre, explicating the potential functions or roles of musical theatre dance, as well as linking the practice of historic musical theatre choreographers and directors to my own praxis. It also engages with the history of dance as a disruptive force within the musical, identifying key practitioners and performance texts that have subverted audience expectations through dance and are thus relevant for my own research.

- **Chapter Four: Theories and Frameworks.** This chapter is dedicated to the major theories and guiding frameworks from within the field that specifically informed my research. I begin by discussing theories specific to musical theatre and its dance before broadening my scope into the wider field of performance studies. Contemporary musical theatre theorists include Scott McMillin and Millie Taylor, with a short discussion regarding the ongoing influence of integration theory on the musical genre. There is also a consideration of the practical functions of show dance, prefacing a shift from musical theatre specific theories into the broader realm of performance studies where I will be focussing on audience
reception, performance, genre, semiotics, and culture regarding my own praxis.

- **Chapter Five: Research and Praxis.** This chapter contains my critical reflection on the development of the choreography for *2084* from concept to performance, an analysis of the text in performance using the theories and frameworks discussed in Chapter Four, future considerations for the piece, as well as a consideration of the human participant research elements of the project. This includes discussion about the culture of performer feedback cultivated during the initial workshop of *2084*, as well as the responses received from anonymous audience surveys at the performances of the completed creative artefact.

- **Chapter Six: Conclusions.** In this final chapter I conclude my argument that musical theatre dance is a complex art form, and one that requires further academic scrutiny going forward. I also offer some suggestions for future scholars and reiterate my contribution to knowledge.

The main body of my exegesis is followed by my Appendices which consist of a glossary of important terms and abbreviations, an annotated version of the script for *2084*, along with other relevant supplementary material. These Appendices should ideally be read in conjunction with the video recording of *2084*. 
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY
The first half of this chapter comprises my literature review, with each section being framed by major trends within the area. The latter half contains a discussion of my methodologies and is primarily focussed on the notion of creative arts praxis.

The common consensus from recent historians is that musical theatre, as distinct from earlier forms of music theatre, has been linked to performance texts as far back as *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) and *The Black Crook* (1866), with what we might consider the modern musical beginning to develop in earnest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Kenrick, 2008). Despite this, most of the theoretical and historical literature in this area does not begin to emerge until the late 1970s – more than fifty years after some of the earliest musical comedies. It is perhaps interesting to note that a large body of the scholarship in this area initially began to be published at the tail end of what historians refer to as the golden age of musical theatre, which is generally considered to have occurred in the mid to late twentieth century. Many pioneers of musical theatre dance lived and worked during this time, and their influence is still seen through the ongoing use of dance conventions established by well-known performers, directors and choreographers.

The primary issue with the concept of the golden age is that it suggests a linear historical progression of the musical form, moving from the spectacle and entertainment of revues and musical comedies to the integrated dramas of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Agnes de Mille, and their contemporaries. It also implies an inevitable decline in quality once the era is over, which may go some way to explaining the prevailing biases that are still present, particularly towards sub-genres of musical theatre that specifically work to utilise spectacle and comedy. As of the writing of this thesis, the integrated musicals of the golden age are still largely considered to occupy the apex of artistic achievement within the musical theatre genre, and the integration of song and dance into a pre-existing

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4 While there is ongoing debate amongst historians and critics about the appropriateness of and the parameters of this term, the golden age is considered to have occurred during the mid-twentieth century, usually between the 1930s and the 1960s. My usage of this term aligns most closely with Stacy Wolf and Liza Gennaro as elucidated in their chapter ‘Dance in Musical Theatre’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater* (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015). Specifically, my intention in its use within my exegesis is that it should evoke a general period and style of musical theatre, and not be used merely as a synonym of the term ‘integrated musical’.
narrative remains an overarching theoretical and practical consideration of many within the field. As a result, musical theatre dance which is not intrinsic to the narrative of a show is still often relegated to the realm of excess and spectacle and dismissed as not being worthy of critical discussion.

As scholars we cannot ignore the fact that historically, integrated musicals saw the function of show dance expand into new artistic realms, allowing contemporary practitioners endless possibilities with their craft. But similarly, to discount the multiple roles that dance has historically played within the musical indicates a failure to engage with the many functions that it can perform, and a dismissal of a fascinating area of study which might yield new insights into this complex, interdisciplinary, and yes, commercial art form. For all their perceived faults, the popularity of technology driven rock musicals, British mega-musicals, jukebox musicals, Disney musicals, and the corporate musical has ultimately contributed to the global popularity and cultural impact of musical theatre. It has also helped to bolster academic interest in the musical as a major performative genre, including a recent interest in the function and role of dance as a convention that is often considered as integral as the songs and script.

While it is certainly true that some musicals might not use or even need dance, the popularity of musicals that do utilise dance and movement cannot be discounted. In fact, the decision to not use dance in a musical is an important aesthetic and structural choice, subverting traditional conventions that are linked, not only to the integrated musical but to the very roots of the musical theatre genre. Although there are (and will continue to be) many musicals which eschew the use of dance for various reasons, the following words from Richard Kislan in 1987 still resonate profoundly today:

The modern musical moves, and by no means do dancers monopolize the movement. Everything moves – scenery, props, lighting equipment, and the entire cast. When successful, the production acquires very up-to-date, jet-age look: fast, smooth, sleek, and dynamically designed.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 95)

This sentiment echoes the well-known saying amongst musical theatre practitioners that “when you can no longer speak, you sing; when you can no
longer sing, you dance” (Viertal, 2016, p. xvi). The implication here is that dance can somehow express emotion in a purer form than words. McMillin, author of *The Musical as Drama*, says; “dance does not require words, just music and the dancing body. Dance can use words, but it does not have to” (McMillin, 2006, pp. 140-141). While dance may not always be the primary method of storytelling within a musical, there is no denying that it has the capacity to serve many other functions that support the narrative. Some examples of this might be the explication of sub-text through movement, demonstrating elements of character, mood, and emotion, or simply creating pleasure and entertainment for an audience. In straight drama, gesture and body language work to reveal the inner worlds of the characters onstage and their relationships with each other. In the musical, the dancing form takes this one step further by expanding the mode of characterisation into their singing and dancing selves (McMillin, 2006, p. 199). Whether Elphaba’s awkward gyrations at the Oz Dust Ballroom, the aggressive posturing of the dance hall girls in *Sweet Charity*, or the explication of Laurey’s innermost desires in the famous dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* characters who dance within the musical arguably have more scope to express themselves than those who do not.

So why then, is this area still undervalued and underdeveloped compared to most other areas of musical theatre scholarship? The following quotes represent the views of a variety of authors over close to thirty years, and each of them raises very similar concerns regarding the state of the literature surrounding the field of musical theatre dance:

> If the musical components of American musical theatre have been neglected by some drama critics, or not perceptively appreciated by others, the role of dance in musicals has been even less well understood or valued.

(Loney, 1984, p. 8)

> Nothing in the American musical theater has been more inaccessible to its public than the record of its dance tradition […] the literary tradition of our lyric theater rests

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5 While this quote is most often attributed to choreographer Warren Carlyle, he has admitted that the words are not his own but came from an unnamed mentor. It is also referenced by Woolford in *How Musicals Work*: “there is a cliché that characters since when the emotional pitch reaches a level at which speaking is no longer appropriate, and they dance when the emotional pitch reaches that at which singing is no longer appropriate” (Woolford, 2012, p. 251).
comfortably, safe from the ravages of time. But fate extended no such courtesy to the performance tradition of musical-theater dance.

(Kislan, 1987, p. vii)

There is amazingly little in the way of published material discussing the development of dance in musical theatre. This essay cannot hope to make up for that inexplicable shortfall.

(Kenrick, Dance in Stage Musicals, 2004)

Thinking and writing about dance in musical theater is difficult, which is evident from the relatively few books and articles on the subject.

(Dorsey, 2011, p. 338)

Each of these scholars above raise similar concerns regarding the state of the literature that surrounds the field of musical theatre dance. Of note is the lack of a substantial scholarly and academic heritage for much of its development. This is a symptom and a cause of ongoing critical neglect and the loss of history – both of which are intrinsically linked to the historic dismissal of show dance as an art form in its own right. David Savran suggests that until very recently “historians and critics of twentieth-century theatre have obstinately (if inadvertently) endorsed the binary opposition between highbrow and lowbrow” (Savran, 2004, p. 211) and that this binary opposition has granted literary or text-based theatre “a degree of prestige denied musical or variety entertainments” (Savran, 2009, p. 105). The privileging of certain types of performance and the creation of artistic hierarchies or canons of historically important texts can be observed not only within the field of musical theatre, but also the wider field of Western performance studies. The obvious comparison to make here is to opera and classical ballet, both of which boast a long history of critical and academic engagement due to their alignment with wealth and privilege, as well as a certain degree of technical difficulty and artistry. By comparison, the musical evolved out of popular entertainments for the lower and middle classes and is still considered by many to be a frivolous commercial enterprise unworthy of deeper analysis. As Richard Schechner suggests in his discussion of the functions of live performance: “A Broadway musical will entertain, but little else” (Schechner, 2013, p. 46).
This attitude may have also prevailed because some (not all) modern musicals deliberately play into these somewhat dated stereotypes about the musical and its dance in order to capitalise on the humour and nostalgia that it evokes. New musical comedies6 utilise codes, conventions and imagery that is reminiscent of early musical comedies, reimagined through a contemporary lens, and often utilised to create self-reflexive comedy that pokes fun at the musical genre. These shows utilise recognisable choreographic styles, steps, and motifs to create nostalgia, pleasure, entertainment, and humour. These of course are only some of the many functions that dance performs within the contemporary musical, however the very existence of these shows indicates that there is still a broader cultural perception that musical theatre, and specifically its dance, is often little more than a collection of performative clichés designed to incite standing ovations from the masses.7

Some of the other obstacles to greater critical engagement with musical theatre dance have been elucidated by Zachary Dorsey, whom I have quoted above. He argues that in addition to the loss of history and a lack of critical writing, one of the greatest difficulties of engaging with show dance is to do with accessibility and the potential need for repeat viewing of performance texts in order to successfully analyse them. Regarding the study of show dance, Dorsey says:

"[I]t’s frustrating to have the object of inquiry only briefly available, which may render the pursuit of dance scholarship altogether unattractive to even the most diligent of researchers."

(Dorsey, 2011, p. 340)

The historic lack of engagement with musical theatre dance makes sense when we consider, as Kislan does, the ephemeral nature of show dance compared to the more tangible work of librettists, composers, and lyricists. Scores, librettos, and cast albums have long preserved the music, lyrics, and dialogue from musicals – the same cannot necessarily be said of dance and movement (Kislan, 1987, p. xv). This is an issue that impacts on all forms of live performance that

6 For more information about my use of this term please see my discussion of new musical comedies in Chapters Three and Five, as well as in the Glossary of Terms in the Appendices.
7 See my analysis of ‘A Musical’ from Something Rotten in Chapter Five for more.
involve embodied action, but I would argue that it is specifically pertinent for musical theatre dance.

Dorsey also suggests that the lack of show dance scholarship may also be in part due to anxiety from non-dance specialists that they lack the correct vocabularies for engaging effectively with the field. This is in spite of the fact that musical theatre dance is predominantly designed to effectively communicate a dominant meaning to a general theatregoing audience and thus, an analysis of show dance should technically be able to be articulated by almost anyone (Dorsey, 2011, p. 339). I suggest that this anxiety is further compounded by the lack of a leading framework that can adequately encompass all forms of musical theatre and the varied functions that dance can perform within it. This is once again indicative of a broader problem within the field of performance studies which also has no singular leading framework, though I would suggest that straight dramatic plays have a long history of textual and (more recently) performance analysis. The specific difficulty in analysing musical theatre is that it is difficult to parse the often complex and interdisciplinary nature of these texts, namely the interplay between song, dance, and drama. As McMillin asks in the preface to *The Musical as Drama*: “Are we able to use our methods of analysis – historical, musical, literary, philosophical – and still get this form of popular entertainment right?” (McMillin, 2006, p. xi).

A final consideration that is specific to my own research is that this exegesis specifically explores my search for theoretical and practical frameworks that met my needs as a scholar-practitioner working both as an academic and as a creative. Farrier suggests that there is a perception within the creative arts that “practitioners ‘do’ and academics ‘think’” (Farrier, 2005, p. 140). This perception fundamentally fails to acknowledge the fact that no creative work is created or performed in a vacuum devoid of external influences. While engaging heavily with theory during the creation of art might be frowned upon by some, my own research has shown that many musical theatre choreographers utilised ethnographic research or theories to enhance their work. This includes the work of practitioners like Katherine Dunham and Agnes de Mille, both of whom are known for their contributions to the field of both modern and musical theatre dance. In addition, Dunham worked extensively within the field of dance anthropology (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, pp. 66-69) while de Mille is
remembered in part for her psychologically motivated choreography (Gardner, 2016). While creative practitioners might not necessarily begin with theory, once a work exists and critics and audience members begin engaging with it, they will inevitably theorise the performance in some way in order to understand the meaning it is trying to convey. An example which relates specifically to show dance might be the use of visual symbolism, where meaning might be articulated through gesture, body language, the dance style/s used, perhaps even the performing body itself. Even if an audience member is not consciously identifying and decoding these conventions, there will always be a level of subconscious understanding due to their understanding of visual symbolism taken from their day to day life. The interplay between theory and practice in musical theatre dance is not a new phenomenon then, but certainly one that is beginning to be explored in a more meaningful way by scholars.

Within this chapter I will be identifying the key texts I have drawn on in my research, beginning with a consideration of the literature concerning musical theatre and its dance. As my research is concerned with an understanding of show dance from an audience perspective, I have chosen to focus on texts which engage more broadly with the field rather than on biographies of specific performers or choreographic practitioners. My literature review includes a consideration of historical texts, the accessibility of performance texts, theories of musical theatre and its dance (supplemented with appropriate theories from the wider field of performance studies), and finally a selection of practical guides for the creation of musicals and choreography. Each of these sections has been framed by the overarching trends I have discovered, particularly the specific biases that I (and others) have identified and will conclude with a brief discussion of the current state of the literature.

The second part of this chapter is a discussion of the methodological approaches that informed my choreographic praxis and the collection of audience responses. This section is primarily focussed on the field of praxis-based research and autoethnography. It includes a discussion of praxis terminologies, methodological frames, and how the intersection between different forms of research has ultimately shaped the methodological underpinnings of my creative praxis and my traditional research.
2.1 Literature Review

Lost histories, or, the male dominated Broadway-centrism of musical theatre dance

Despite the historic importance of dance to the musical theatre genre, there has been an ongoing lack of critical engagement with it for much of its history. In *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader*, Helen Thomas suggests that the history of dance might be more accurately described as a history of “lost dances” (Thomas, 2004, p. 34). While contemporary dance scholars are candid about the difficulties facing researchers in all genres of dance, show dance might be considered one of the most underdeveloped areas of dance scholarship. Historically associated as a form of ‘low’ art, it is hardly surprising that much of the history of show dance comprises of ‘lost dances’. If dance is “an ephemeral art” then show dance is “the most ephemeral part of an ephemeral whole” (Kislan, 1987, p. xv), an art form that has been immortalised in reviews, still photographs, and firsthand accounts, but very rarely preserved through detailed annotation or film until well into its development.

The lack of a tangible history for show dance is only one aspect that has led to an ongoing lack of critical engagement with the genre. Scholars also believe that this is due in part to the ongoing dismissal of dance as a legitimate art form. During the eighteenth century, when the first system for categorising the fine arts was emerging, dance was omitted almost entirely. The foundational elements of our modern understanding of fine arts come from this time, through the work of Hegel. His system of fine art prioritised visual art forms like painting, sculpture and architecture over their aural counterparts, poetry and music:

The idea was that the “fine” arts are those that contribute to knowledge and intellectual thought, with the implication that supposedly non-symbolic and non-verbal arts like dance were pre-lingual and pre-civilization, belonging only to the world of primitive gesture or to the low and the corporeal rather than to the elevated and cultural [...] Thus Hegel can perhaps be credited with what seems to be one underlying idea in analytic aesthetics – that for something to be construed as “art” at all it needs to be understood intellectually rather than responded to in bodily ways.

(Bresnahan, 2015)
Although dance was not originally considered a fine art, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen the emergence of far more critical discourse within the field of dance studies. This has been facilitated in part through the rapid improvement of video recording technologies, as well as the development of dance and movement notation technologies like Labanotation\(^8\) and motion capture. Greater accessibility to these resources has led to more dances being recorded and preserved for future scholars of dance, including many large-scale musicals on Broadway and the West End. Despite this, within the wider fields of dance and performance studies there is still a prevailing sense of elitism in the attitude or approach towards certain dance styles.

This hierarchy is not dissimilar to the literary canon, where the work of certain authors is more highly prized than others. Dance scholars tend to concur that classical ballet has historically been afforded greater academic attention due to its perceived cultural importance, artistry, and technical difficulty (Carter, et al., 1998, pp. 193-194, 197-198). I would also suggest that modern and now contemporary dance are also close to the apex of this hierarchy for many of the same reasons, and that the training of dancers in classical ballet and contemporary dance in performing arts academies corroborates this view. By comparison, musical theatre dance is vastly underrepresented within the academic sphere, despite requiring a high level of creative collaboration, artistry, and vision. The technical difficulty required to become at least proficient in the vast array of dance styles currently being utilised in contemporary musicals places quite extraordinary physical and technical demands on both performers and choreographers, who must be willing to adapt to a wider variety of dance and movement styles than ever before.

Arguably, the musical has never been quite so adaptable regarding the dance and movement, with a long history of using a variety of dance and movement idioms that can be tailored to the specific context and material of any given show. Despite all this, and although dance is arguably one of the reasons that musical theatre is such a popular form of live performance on a global scale,

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\(^8\) Labanotation, originally called Kinetography Laban was a movement notation system originally developed by dance theorist Rudolf Laban in the 1920s *The Mastery of Movement* (Laban, 2011), and has since been developed worldwide. In New York it was particularly popular in the 1940s and 1950s as a means of recording modern dance and later, musical theatre dance. It is still utilised today, as evidenced by the accessibility of books pertaining to the subject.
there is still an overarching cultural assumption that musical theatre dance has little artistic merit compared to other dance styles. As a commercial form associated historically with pleasure and spectacle, musical theatre dance has suffered from an ongoing lack of critical attention, especially towards choreographic texts which have been deemed as artistically or historically unimportant. My impression of this field as I engaged with musical theatre dance through the wider field of dance and performance studies was that scholars are still scrambling to catch up after years of neglect and dismissal from the wider performing arts community.

While there are certainly some dance histories that might dedicate as much as a chapter or two to the development and importance of musical theatre dance, there are many others which barely touch on it at all. I am referring here specifically to (Sorell, 1981) and (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003) both of which cover musical theatre dance in some detail whereas (Carter, et al., 1998), (Dils & Albright, 2001), and (Carter, et al., 2004) barely mention it at all. Musical theatre dance is also often sidelined within musical theatre specific texts. A wide variety of musical theatre histories have been published since 1970 by the likes of Ethan Mordden, Richard Kislan, Kurt Gänzl, Stanley Green, and Alan Jay Lerner, but although musical theatre dance is usually discussed in some capacity it is rarely the primary focus of their discussion unless the dance and choreography are considered ground-breaking or pioneering in some way.

While there are a number of dissertations, history books, and conference papers published regarding show dance history throughout the twentieth century⁹, the most recent text that focuses solely on the heritage and history of show dance is Richard Kislan’s Hoofing on Broadway: A History of Show Dancing (Kislan, 1987). In this text Kislan details the early origins of show dance before going on to discuss some of the more prolific and important choreographers and show dance movements of the twentieth century. It concludes with a series of considerations for the future of show dance, including the evolving relationship between dance and film, as well as a brief guide designed for dancers wanting to work in the industry. While it is eminently readable and relatively comprehensive,

Hoofing on Broadway was published more than thirty years ago at the time of writing. In that time musical theatre and its dance have changed dramatically, yet there has been no updated history of musical theatre dance which goes into the same detail that Kislan does, particularly in earlier chapters when he is discussing early forms of show dance. In addition, Kislan appears to have chosen to focus predominantly on American choreographic practitioners who have achieved greater degrees of success and accolades, resulting in a very clear gender bias towards male choreographers. In Chapters Four and Five which focus on the work of early dance-directors and pioneering choreographers from the mid-twentieth century respectively, the only female practitioners whose work is discussed in any amount of depth are Albertina Rasch and Agnes de Mille. Later chapters offer expansive discussions of the work of Jerome Robbins, Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, Michael Bennett, and Tommy Tune, but provide very little if any discussion of the body of work done by important female choreographers of this era, including: Katherine Dunham, Onna White, Hanya Holm, Graciela Daniele, Gillian Lynne, Ann Reinking, and Gwen Verdon (Kislan, 1987).

The focus on pioneering or award-winning musicals and practitioners who have worked on Broadway is a bias that is so deeply entrenched within the field that it is almost impossible to avoid them. Consider the titles of these recent histories of musical theatre: Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now (Steyn, 2000), "No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance": A History of the American Musical Theater (Patinkin, 2008), Showtime! A History of the Broadway Musical Theater (Stempel, 2011), and A History of the American Musical Theatre: No Business Like It (Hurwitz, 2014). These titles all contain either the words ‘Broadway’ or ‘American’, indicating a geographical and cultural bias that dominates the study of musical theatre and its dance. Whilst narrowing the focus is often a necessity for such a broad topic, and the evolution of the musical genre and its dance is due in no small part to the innovation of American practitioners, many musical theatre scholars are quick to acknowledge the global impact the genre has had while also dismissing the cultural and artistic importance of any performances outside of the United States.

In the case of musical theatre dance, this often results in a failure to acknowledge the work of lesser known and international choreographers, and how their work has helped to shape the genre on a global scale. This includes
the work of female choreographers, many of whom have until recently only existed in the margins of history, overshadowed by the work of their male colleagues. Many female choreographers have created works that are considered artistically and historically significant while not necessarily achieving commercial or international success. In addition, my historical research suggests that many female choreographers have worked primarily on commercial projects like revivals, showcases that celebrate the work of their award-winning male colleagues, or musical comedies. Consider the working relationships and mentoring between choreographers like Lynne Taylor-Corbett and Jack Cole, Patricia Birch and Michael Kidd, Ann Reinking and Bob Fosse, or Graciela Daniele and Michael Bennett. Which of these choreographers are more well known for their work? The answer, resoundingly, is the men.

Gratifyingly, there are scholars who are working to close the current gaps and biases within the broader field of musical theatre, and its dance. This shift can be evidenced as early as the 2000s in the work of historian John Kenrick, whose online essays *Dance in Stage Musicals* (Kenrick, 2004) and *Dance in Screen Musicals* (Kenrick, 2004) give a brief history of the development of musical theatre dance on stage and screen and are available for free on his website musicals101.com. Another more recent source that provides a condensed overview of show dance is the history chapter in practical guide *Beginning Musical Theatre Dance* (Harris, 2016). This text provides a concise overview of dance and music theatre from Greek theatre to the mid-2010s, designed to enhance the knowledge of the musical theatre performer who is just starting out in the field. Though condensed, this chapter, like Kenrick’s online essays provide an attractive alternative to searching through multitudes of generalised musical theatre histories searching for pertinent information regarding show dance or having to read multiple monographs pertaining to individual choreographic practitioners and their work.

Indeed, it was Kenrick’s frank assessment of show dance on his website, (quoted earlier in this chapter) and his notable inclusion of British and American musical theatre forms on his website that ultimately led me to read his *Musical Theater: A History* (Kenrick, 2008) and to ultimately use it as one of my primary historical resources in conjunction with Kislan. Inclusive of a wide array of lesser known musicals including notable flops from both Britain and America, the
breadth of Kenrick’s research provides important historical context on earlier forms of music theatre including European forms such as operetta, comic opera, and ballad operas. His work also positions the musical within the wider sphere of music theatre and performance studies, something which I was also attempting to achieve within my own research.

For a slightly more niche historical angle I have drawn on several other historical texts: Strike Up The Band: A New History of Musical Theatre (Miller, 2007), Women In American Musical Theatre: Essays on Composers, Lyricists, Librettists, Arrangers, Choreographers, Designers, Directors, Producers and Performance Artists (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008), and Agnes de Mille: Telling Stories In Broadway Dance (Gardner, 2016). While Miller does not delve quite so far into the past as Kenrick, his focus on lesser known musicals and Off-Broadway shows provides context for a broader consideration of the genre during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The essays curated by Coleman and Sebesta has also proven vital for its focus on female practitioners, particularly performers and choreographers who have historically had their work overshadowed by their male counterparts as mentioned above. This is a notable feature of Gardner’s book as well, which not only discusses the impact of Agnes de Mille, but also goes into some detail about the work of her predecessors as well as her working relationships with her contemporaries. Not only does Gardner provide a wonderfully detailed perspective of de Mille’s career as a choreographer, it also covers the lasting impact that she had on Broadway both creatively and as an advocate for the rights of choreographers.

Alternate histories of musical theatre that have also shaped my research include: Dance In Its Time: The Emergence of an Art Form (Sorell, 1981), Kerry Lee Graves’ dissertation The Emerging Prominence of Women Choreographers in The American Musical Theatre: A History and Analysis (Graves, 2001), Dance in the Twentieth Century: No Fixed Points (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003), The Cambridge Companion to the Musical (Everett & Laird, 2008), Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History (Hill, 2009), A Million Miles From Broadway: Musical Theatre Beyond New York and London (Atkey, 2012)\textsuperscript{10}, What the Eye Hears: A

\textsuperscript{10} A Million Miles From Broadway is an excellent resource regarding the global impact of musical theatre, however the lack of content regarding show dance is particularly disappointing, particularly from my perspective as an Australian scholar when there are so many dance heavy shows that have been produced here within my lifetime.
History of Tap Dancing (Seibart, 2015), and British Musical Theatre Since 1950 (Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016). Other sources which I have not specifically referenced within this thesis but have included as part of my wider reading include: The Queer Encyclopedia of Music, Dance, & Musical Theater (Summers, 2004), The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from Hair to Hedwig (Wollman, 2006), and Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical (Wolf, 2011).

While show dance was once vastly underrepresented in historical texts, this trend is now beginning to shift. While there are many texts written by men with a focus on male practitioners with a strong geographical focus on Broadway, integrated musicals, and the golden age of musical theatre, this trend is now beginning to change. There has already been a renewed focus on the work of female choreographers, new readings of the genre from feminist and queer perspectives, a greater focus on previously overlooked time periods and musical sub-genres, and broader geographical perspectives that account for the development of the musical in Britain, and internationally. As the field expands, hopefully there will be an updated and more substantial history of musical theatre dance, ideally one that works to rectify some of the remaining gaps within the literature and engaging with show dance from a more global perspective.

Access to performance texts

Because of my own geographical isolation, a large component of my research has involved engaging with musical texts in a variety of capacities. This has included: watching film musicals, field research trips to London, New York, Sydney and Melbourne to engage with live shows, and the viewing of filmed musicals on streaming services like BroadwayHD. I have also engaged with other forms of online media in order to better supplement my research. Online resources including the Internet Broadway Database and YouTube have both been invaluable resources, as have the websites of major media outlets which have many archival interviews and reviews available for perusal. The need to engage with a broader variety of literature is not simply because of my geographical isolation, but also due to the lack of accessibility as discussed above by Dorsey.
While advances in video and streaming technologies have seen an increase in the preservation and dissemination of musical theatre dance, much of the history of early show dance survives now only in still images, first-hand accounts, or the embodied memory of performers who passed their skills down to the next generations of dancers. Some early show dance was preserved through being adapted into movie musicals, often reusing or reworking the choreography from stage shows. Although a sense of the original production might be gleaned from a movie musical, it should ideally be supplemented by other primary sources where. This can be problematic for contemporary academics wishing to interact with early stage choreography which survives only through filmic adaptations. Despite sharing many of the same conventions, stage and screen musicals are generally considered by scholars to be separate genres with their own heritage. There are also legitimate concerns about reducing live dance to a flattened image on a screen – namely that in a live musical theatre performance the audience chooses where to look whereas in a film musical the camera (and by association the director) chooses for them. This was not so troublesome in the early days of filmed dance where the use of largely static camera shots gives an audience an impression of the choreography not dissimilar to what they would experience in a live performance context. But the rapid improvement in film technologies throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has since allowed for greater flexibility and creativity in how dance is filmed and edited. Compare Baz Luhrmann’s *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) to one of Fred Astaire’s early films and there is a marked difference in how the dancing is choreographed, filmed, and edited.

Compounding the historic lack of video documentation, musical theatre dance is also notoriously lacking a universal and easily understood form of notation. Although Labanotation was utilised to preserve and catalogue a select number of musicals in the 1960s, the complexity of the system means that it has never been widely used within the industry. In addition, many of these documents are not only tremendously difficult to locate, but also require a very specialised set of skills to interpret. Another obstacle was copyright, with legal protections for choreographers in the United States being close to non-existent until the 1970s. Kara Anne Gardner discusses this phenomenon in some detail, including the fact that pioneering choreographer Agnes de Mille had to fight hard to get legal
recognition that her landmark choreography for shows like *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* were integral to the success of the shows and thus she should be paid royalties for subsequent staging’s of these productions that utilised her choreography:

> [During this time, dance] was seen as an accent, as atmosphere, comparable with staging and lighting. It could have significant impact on a musical, but it was not considered part of “the work” once a production reached the end of its run. Often, stage directions and choreography were described in published librettos, perhaps even with enough detail to reproduce them in revivals. But those published librettos were considered the property of the composers and librettists, so choreographers and directors received no royalties for their work. Many of them also felt they were underpaid, and they were not protected by the Actors’ Equity union.

(Gardner, 2016)

Legally, many choreographic works belonged to the Theatre Guild until an amendment to the copyright act in 1976. Prior to this, choreography for the commercial theatre had to be registered as a “dramatic composition” to qualify for legal protections (Kislan, 1987, p. xiii) and contractual agreements based on earlier legislation meant that the choreography for many shows were considered to be “works for hire” instead (Gardner, 2016). This made it incredibly difficult for choreographers to copyright and ultimately receive royalties for their work. I would also argue that the choreography for many early shows would have been next to impossible to copyright due to their lack of narrative or dramatic importance.

Thankfully, at least some historical show dance from the United States has been preserved, in part through the efforts of Lee Theodore who founded The American Dance Machine (ADM) in 1975 with the express purpose of creating a ‘Living Archive’ of musical theatre dance. Recognising that much of its history had already been lost, Theodore and ADM dedicated themselves to the reconstruction, documentation, performance and preservation of important routines from show dance history (Kislan, 1987, p. 164). Sadly, Theodore passed away in 1987, and while ADM continued to run classes for several years after her death it soon closed its doors. More recently, ADM21 (American Dance Machine for the 21st Century) was launched to continue the important work that Theodore
began in the 1970s and 1980s, studying historically significant choreography and techniques, as well as working to preserve, study, and share the history of show dance (ADM21, 2019).

Currently, there is a great deal of work currently being done to support the preservation of musical texts, but if we are to preserve and enhance the existing scholarly, historical and critical heritage of show dance as we move into the future there is more work necessary. Unlike cast recordings and sheet music which are readily available for many obscure musicals, access to the original choreography for many shows is still incredibly difficult to access. Although there are physical archives which contain video recordings of historic musical theatre texts, access to them is limited and further hampered by the ability of researchers to travel to them. Rising ticket prices are another obstacle to greater dissemination and analysis of musical theatre dance, and for those who are geographically displaced from New York or London like myself there is also the cost of accommodation and travel to consider. Streaming platforms like BroadwayHD and the National Theatre archives in Britain fulfil some of this demand, but with a relatively limited catalogue of musicals available on both it is hardly surprising that many international musical theatre fans have turned to illegally filmed bootlegs as a means of engaging with their favourite musicals rather than waiting for touring shows.

When we consider the rapid speed at which the musical genre is expanding and evolving, I posit that a freely available online resource for show dance would be an invaluable asset in providing greater understanding and promoting critical analysis. Some of the most fascinating analyses of musical theatre I have read during my candidature have not been by academics and researchers but by casual fans on blogging platforms online. Social media provides an immediate platform where creators and fans can connect with people from all over the world, and their insight and interactions are often incredibly thought provoking – though sadly, not usually peer reviewed or appropriately referenced! While I believe that there will always be a place for physical books, the visual impact of musicals cannot be ignored. Still images, text documents and cast recordings can only do so much, and it is my hope that in the coming years there will be greater global access to musical texts not only through online and
televised streaming, but also perhaps through new technologies such as augmented reality and digital motion capture.

**Critical and Theoretical Texts – Integration, the high art/low art debate, and the sidelining of dance in favour of music and lyrics**

Within the wider field of dance studies, I have identified four major areas that are consistently discussed by scholars. These come primarily from the area of contemporary dance studies (Naranjo, 2010), as well as a more global understanding of the field (Charles, 2014). They are: philosophical, dealing in areas such as aesthetics, semiotics, and hermeneutics; sociological, exploring dance from a cultural and social perspective; choreological, the study of movement analysis and/or dance notation; and therapeutic or medical, which includes areas of study relating to medicine including dance as therapy, and dance within the context of the field of sports science. Discourse within the arena of musical theatre dance has historically been most concerned with the cultural implications of the form, and the impact that it has had on society in return. It is only with the advent of the integrated musical that we see a more scholarly interest in the ways in which dance works to create meaning, and as discussed earlier, much of the scholarly material relating to this area does not begin to emerge until the 1970s.

In 2001, Australian academic Peter Fitzpatrick effectively summed up many of the difficulties cited by musical theatre scholars as to why the genre has lacked a critical and scholarly heritage for such a long time:

Though there have been plenty of books about the Broadway musical [...] very few of the hundreds of books about it even attempt to provide the kinds of theoretical structures that have informed the criticism of other fields during the period. The lack of appropriate conceptual and methodological frameworks, is at once a cause and symptom of critical neglect, is itself a product of other problems and uncertainties. These are related to the absence of a received critical tradition to assume or to react against, the hybrid nature of the genre, and the correspondingly eclectic critical discourses and kinds of expertise that it calls into play.

(Fitzpatrick, 2001, p. 25)
Fitzpatrick was writing in 2001, well before many of the major theorists I am engaging with here in my own research. As of the writing of this thesis, there are still no major theories specifically designed to engage specifically with musical theatre dance – although there are some musical theatre theories that at least consider the functions of dance as a major convention. If we consider that dance is not necessarily the primary mode of storytelling in a musical, this is a reasonably understandable oversight. Fitzpatrick also goes on to suggest that the reliance of the musical on non-verbal and aural codes is what makes it an unattractive and difficult option for many scholars to study – particularly when we consider the rise of drama as a text-based field during the twentieth century (Fitzpatrick, 2001, pp. 25-26). This dramatic hegemony, when combined with an overarching attitude that show dance is primarily used as an aesthetic embellishment has arguably led to substantial gaps within the literature in this area. This neglect is even starker when you consider the substantial historical, critical, and theoretical literature surrounding opera. Despite sharing many of the same non-verbal and aural codes, there is still an ongoing perception that opera is of greater artistic merit than the musical, and that opera is therefore of greater historical and scholarly significance.

It hardly seems surprising then that most critical works discuss the integrated musical tradition in some capacity, even if just to differentiate their own theories from it. The development of the integrated musical has been linked to the narrative of the golden age of musical theatre\textsuperscript{11}; specifically, the desire from practitioners to make the musical more provocative, serious, and artistic, like opera. This is achieved primarily through a focus on the narrative arc as the most important element of the musical’s structure, with all other elements of the production supporting it accordingly. Integration is derived from operatic forms, and specifically the concept of operatic integration which has been most famously theorised by Richard Wagner’s \textit{Gesamtkunstwerk} or total artwork. As the first major theory specifically tailored to musical theatre, the importance of integration in the development of a critical and scholarly heritage for musical theatre cannot

\textsuperscript{11}In relation to the musical, I have traced the term ‘integration’ back to at least 1942 where Jerome Kern discusses integration in terms of music composition for musical theatre in that year’s \textit{Current Biography} (Block & Trow, 1942, p. 451). It appears again in a 1943 article written by Marion Radcliff for \textit{The Billboard} about a revue show called \textit{New Faces of 1943} (Radcliff, 1943, p. 12). These dates are particularly notable for the fact that \textit{Oklahoma!} considered by many scholars to be the first fully integrated musical, premiered in 1943.
be denied. Distinguished by scholars as the defining paradigm shift which occurred during the mid-twentieth century, integration would ultimately launch musical theatre into its current position not only as a form of popular entertainment, but as a legitimate art form.

Although integration was the defining aesthetic for the musical in the mid-twentieth century and went on to dominate the critical sphere from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, it has not always been considered favourably. The integrated musical was at one time blamed for a decrease in artistic credibility with Hal Prince suggesting in 1965 that: “The Broadway musical today is not as impulsive and free as it should be […] and it will be a breath of fresh air if, once in a while, we can get away from the ‘integrated musical’.” (Gross, 1965, p. 89). Integration has also been associated the rising costs of mounting a musical (Lewis, 1970, p. 217), and even dismissed as not being funny (Ewen, 1970, p. 396). Contemporary scholars like Geoffrey Block have also suggested that too much integration might be damaging for a musical\textsuperscript{12} and that in recent years it has become less of an artistic approach and more of a model for profit (Block G., 2011, p. 100). Integration has also never been standardised, as evidenced by the ongoing debate about what exactly constitutes an integrated musical, or an integrated number.

One of the earliest attempts to explore integration from a theoretical perspective can be found in the work of film historian John Mueller. His article *Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical* (Mueller, 1984) is one of the earliest attempts to explore integration from a theoretical perspective, suggesting six different levels of integration for song and dance numbers:

1) Completely irrelevant to the plot
2) Contributes to the spirit or theme
3) Existence is relevant to the plot, but its content is not
4) Enriches the plot but doesn’t advance it
5) Advances the plot but not by its content
6) Advances plot or character, a fully ‘integrated’ number

(Mueller, 1984, pp. 28-30)

\textsuperscript{12} His examples being *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables* where “increased integration is matched with decreased dramatic meaning” (Block G., 2011, p. 108).
This framework is specifically used by Mueller as a means of interrogating dominant historical ideologies regarding the history of narrative-led dance within the film musical – namely that the first fully integrated dance number that advanced plot or character was ‘Slaughter on Tenth Avenue’ in On Your Toes in 1936, or ‘Laurey Makes Up Her Mind’ from Oklahoma! in 1943.

Mueller also briefly discusses integrated dance in his book Astaire Dancing (Mueller, 1985), a comprehensive study of Fred Astaire’s movie musicals which provides blow by blow descriptions and written analyses of every dance number from over thirty screen musicals, and is accompanied by screen captures, plot synopses and other important details about the film making process. While Mueller’s focus on screen dance is entirely understandable when we consider the lack of accessibility for dance in early stage musicals, the frames of analysis that he has used in conjunction with integration (namely semiotics) can easily be applied to the stage musical as well. In fact, the analytical framework Mueller uses here is not dissimilar to the three-part framework suggested more recently by Zachary Dorsey in The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical which suggests an interactive process between the modes of description, synthesis, and interpretation (Dorsey, 2011, pp. 341-342). A similar style of analysis can also be observed in recent dissertation: The Functions of Dance in Musical Theatre The Innovations of Andy Blankenbuehler (Walker, 2017) which involves a discussion of the choreography for In the Heights and Hamilton. Despite these more current innovations, the sheer amount of analysis done by Mueller is unparalleled within the field, and his writing also provides valuable insights into early theorisation and analysis of dance in the musical, particularly regarding the integrated tradition.

Other scholars who have attempted to categorise the functions of show dance utilising the frame of integration in some capacity include Lisa Jo Sagolla, Rebecca Wright-Phillips, Geoffrey Block, Stacy Wolf and Liza Gennaro. In her dissertation, Sagolla suggests that show dance is often used to advance plot, develop character, create mood or atmosphere, or to embody dramatic themes (Sagolla, 1992), while Wright-Phillips lists integration, plot development, mood, character development, concept, and creativity as the primary functions of show dance in her article about musical theatre dance (Wright-Phillips, 2001). Intriguingly, while the above texts consider dance as fundamental components of
integration, Block’s more recent summary of the principals of integration, delegates the task of integration primarily to the conventions of song, music, and the narrative:

1) The songs advance the plot
2) The songs flow directly from the dialogue
3) The songs express the characters who sing them
4) The dances advance the plot and enhance the dramatic meaning of the songs that precede them
5) The orchestra, through accompaniment and underscoring, parallels, complements, or advances the action

(Block G. , 2011)

Thankfully, Block’s assertion that the primary function of dance is to support what has already been established through the book and songs is one that is contested by contemporary dance scholars. Although Stacy Wolf and Liza Gennaro discuss the use of dance to narrate a story and have a section where they focus specifically on “integrated dance, character expressiveness and movement innovation” (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 157) they also analyse some of the other functions that dance might perform including the use of dance to examine a characters psyche, dance as a form of subtext, as transition, as metaphor, as well as the use of abstract movement (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015).

Despite its historic importance, there are several issues with integration as a theory. The exact parameters of integration remain unclear, with the term being used so widely that some scholars have argued that it has become at worst meaningless, at best imprecise (Taylor, 2012, p. 63). Because of this uncertainty, there is the potential for almost any musical with some semblance of a serious plot, and songs and dance that appear to develop organically out of the narrative action to be deemed integrated. A further concern is that the ranking of songs and dances based on their level of integration into the narrative – as Mueller suggests – means that integrated numbers and integrated musicals have the capacity to be considered artistically superior to those which are not. This is particularly worrying when we consider that much of the analysis in this field is either text-based, literary forms of analysis which tend to centre around the book and lyrics, or musicological analysis which focusses specifically on the music.
While these are both certainly important and valid approaches, by focussing predominantly on the book and how the numbers work to support it, integration often inadvertently prioritises the libretto while sidelining the role of dance. In addition, the concept of an integrated performance text suggests that it provides a clear and cohesive reading for its audience through the seamless blending of each of the major performative elements. This does not necessarily account for the effects that are created by musical texts in performance, and particularly the way that song, dance, and dramatic text all work to create meaning. After all, musicals can create tension or disruption just as readily as integration, synthesis or cohesion.

To dismiss texts that do not hold up under the model of integration as being unworthy of critical attention is to contribute to the ongoing high/low art debate, sidelining a large proportion of musical theatre texts which utilise dance in disruptive ways including: early musical comedies that relied on the use of dance as a disruptive, entertaining force; musicals where the focus shifts away from the narrative in favour of a focus on music (jukebox musicals), theme (concept musicals) or dance (dansicals); or indeed, any work which deliberately highlights the fundamental differences between book and number in order to create theatrical effect. This is echoed by Sagolla in her 1992 dissertation but lamented or otherwise ignored by several who followed her, with some scholars choosing to continue to champion the integrated tradition. Two theses from the University of Nevada: Robert Dame’s *The integration of dance as a dramatic element in Broadway musical theatre* (Dame, 1995), and Phoebe Newsted’s *Dance in the contemporary musical theater: What has become of the dream ballet?* (Newsted, 2000), as well as Mark Grant’s *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical* (Grant, 2005) identify the integrated musicals of the golden age as the apex of musical theatre achievement, and suggest that musicals from later decades indicate an overall decline in the quality of the form.

Integration can be a useful tool, and its goal of creating narrative cohesion through synthesis of the varied elements of a production is admirable. However, it simply does not account for the fact that musicals are sometimes at their most dramatically powerful and entertaining when they welcome the disruption or disconnect that occurs between book and number. To rely solely on this theory would be to do a disservice to the theatrical and dramatic capabilities of the
musical. Thankfully, the bias towards the integrated musical is now beginning to be addressed, with an identifiable shift after the turn of the millennium towards a scholarly tradition which works to better embrace all aspects of musical theatre. This new form of analysis aims to respect the heritage and history of the musical as being related to but distinct from opera, exploring the broad spectrum of dramatic and theatrical capabilities of song and dance within the musical genre.

Two of the primary theoretical texts I have drawn on are *The Musical as Drama* (McMillin, 2006), and *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment* (Taylor, 2012). Both discuss musical conventions at some length (including dance) as well as how musicals work to create both meaning and pleasure for an audience. This ties back into my own interest in studying audience reception, as a practitioner who began as an audience member myself. *The Musical as Drama* is one of the earliest texts to eschew traditional methods of analysis, building on the work of earlier scholars including Nicholas Phillips who attempted to discuss a critical theory of the musical in his 1990 dissertation (Phillips N. L., 1990). McMillin suggests that new modes of thinking are required in order to break away from the strictures of integration if we are ever to consider the musical as “a dramatic genre of its own” with its own aesthetic form, rather than as a mere “stepchild of opera” (McMillin, 2006, pp. x-5). He also disagrees with the basic premise of integration, namely that song and dance should be integrated into the narrative of the book and instead suggests that most songs and dances do not actually advance plot and character – even if they are what we could consider integrated.

McMillin’s theory of doubled or lyric time posits that the song and dance numbers within a musical exist in a second measure of time which runs parallel to the book, expanding the theatrical capabilities of storytelling through the pleasure of repetition, and through the inherent difference between book and number. This doubling allows the characters to expand from their dramatic selves into their singing/dancing selves, a complex form of character building which allows musicals to explore character through multiple lenses including text, song, and movement. This is very different to integration, which attempts to smooth the disjunction between book and number in much the same way that opera did before it. The use of through-sung score, underscoring, and integrated numbers which aim to advance the narrative and develop character are all techniques
which have been used in integrated musical theatre, however they do not account for the tantalising liminal space that occurs when the musical shifts from book to number. Doubled time embraces the potentially jarring effect that might occur here, identifying this disjunction as a hallmark of the musical genre. Rather than using the outdated term of integration, McMillin suggests instead that “cohesive musical” might be a more inclusive term. Where integration suggests the championing of one specific structural element, he suggests that cohesion implies that meaning is created through the interplay of difference. “A theory of the musical,” he suggests, “has to regard songs and dances as basic elements, equal to plot and character and influential on both” (McMillin, 2006, p. 7).

Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment also embraces the potential for disjunction within the musical. Within it, Taylor considers the idea of excess and loss in relation to song and dance, analysing how a variety of comedic and dramatic effects might be created for an audience depending on how numbers are framed and ultimately perceived. She specifically discusses the use of “juxtaposition, reflexivity, parody, alienation and camp” (Taylor, 2012, p. 6) in relation to song and dance in the musical, and further echoes McMillin’s sentiment that an understanding of a musical text should not be founded solely on its narrative:

Narratives and a linear plot are not necessarily the same thing, and musicals can be held together other than by the linear narrative of the book musical [...] Musicals can be based around a thematic concept [...] or include complex meta-narratives.

(Taylor, 2012, p. 108)

Taylor argues that meaning is often created through the complex interplay between production elements and that each component has the capacity to either support or contradict one another, depending on how they are read and understood by an audience. Her analysis strongly evokes audience reception theories and considers the fact that while most audience members will ideally interpret texts in similar ways due to a shared cultural understanding, there is also room for differences in how individual audience members might engage with texts based on their own personal background.
While both McMillin and Taylor’s work has been integral to shaping my research journey, it is worth noting that they have both been shaped by the theories and biases that have come before them. Both highlight the fact that dance is an important convention of the musical, and there are certainly elements of great dance analysis done by both. McMillin’s discussions of the 2004 revival of *Pacific Overtures* for example provides a tantalising glimpse into the use of dance as a disjunctive force. His discussion of the role of dance relating to his theory of the ensemble effect is similarly excellent. However, most of his analysis only looks at well-known integrated or narrative based choreography. Although McMillin suggests that song and dance are equally as important as the narrative, his analysis of show dance is nowhere near as comprehensive as his work discussing lyrics, music and dialogue. In some ways this is understandable considering the time in which he was writing. By comparison, Taylor readily admits her awareness of the biases within the area towards integration and text-based analysis, yet she still focusses predominantly on “the relationship between book, lyrics, music and performers” (Taylor, 2012, p. 151). One example that stands out is her exploration of the comedic possibilities of musical theatre dance in her discussion of camp in *The Producers*, but she then fails to engage with the choreography of other works using the tools that she cites as part of her analytical framework.

Ultimately, their consideration of the lyrics, music and book is much more in depth than their dance analysis, and the excellent work done by McMillin and Taylor in their discussion of dance does not negate the prevailing biases within the field. Within the wider field of musical theatre, the overwhelming focus is still on the importance of music, lyrics, and dialogue. The preservation of these elements has consistently seen show dance sidelined in favour of text-based analysis based on literary studies, or musicological analysis. Critical texts largely group song and dance together into ‘numbers’, highlighting the similarities between the two in order to delineate book from number. This fails to consider song and dance as two different performance entities (one primarily aural, the other visual) which have the capacity to work with and against each other (and other production elements) in order to create meaning for an audience. While song and dance are undoubtedly linked within the context of a musical performance and often they work to achieve similar ends, the grouping of song
and dance into ‘numbers’ in order to juxtapose their effect with that of the libretto or ‘book’ does not consider the inherent differences between them. As a dance scholar I feel it is important to consider these differences, and how they work to communicate meaning to an audience. The use of cohesion and/or disjunction between aural and visual codes to create comedic or dramatic effects is still very much a developing field, and one that I have explored myself within my own analysis in Chapter Four.

**Essay collections, multi-modal forms of analysis, and arguments regarding the use of wider theoretical frames**

In his *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Richard Schechner argued that no theory of performance can be truly universal due to the intercultural, globalised world in which we now live (Schechner, 2013, p. 2). The musical, with its various permutations and numerous sub genres has attracted a variety of methods and frameworks for analysis over the years. In the previous sections of this chapter I have already identified some of the theoretical frameworks that are specific to musical theatre that currently exist. But within the last decade there has been a large body of work published, utilising theoretical frames from other areas to analyse and discuss the musical from within a broader context. Quite often the analysis of musical theatre using these external frames do not comprise entire books, but collections of journal articles, papers, essays, and case studies that are then published in loosely linked anthologies. Some of these include: *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical* (Knapp, Morris, & Wolf, 2011), *Studying Musical Theatre: Theory and Practice* (Taylor & Symonds, 2014), *Gestures of Music Theater: The Performativity of Song and Dance* (Symonds & Taylor, 2014), Chapter Eight ‘Dance in Musical Theatre’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater* (George-Graves, 2015), *British Musical Theatre Since 1950* (Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016), and *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical* (Gordon & Jubin, 2017)\(^\text{13}\).

\(^{13}\) Once again, many of the biases I have already explored are again identifiable in these texts, but gratifyingly there is also evidence of an increased focus on marginalised voices, histories, and geographical regions, as evidenced by an increasing number of articles which engage specifically with the work of female practitioners, sub-genres like jukebox musicals which have previously been sidelined by scholars, and also with British musicals.
The broad range of theoretical frames used in these collections represents theories taken from the wider fields of performance, genre, literary, media, and cultural studies, among others. Interestingly, despite the growing popularity of using broader theoretical frames to analyse the musical, there are those within the field who do not necessarily endorse this kind of analysis. Dorsey’s chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical* deals specifically with articulating a framework for the analysis of show dance, but in it he seems to suggest a formalist or Leavisite approach whereby all relevant meaning can be inferred from the performance text alone. My concern is that Dorsey asserts quite clearly that external theories should not form the basis of analysis for musical theatre despite explicitly invoking external theories himself without ever naming them. This includes a discussion of semiotics and visual meaning making, as well as invoking Roland Barthes’ death of the author. By merely focussing on a singular performance text, this type of analysis fails to take into consideration the knowledge of codes and conventions learned from viewing other performance texts, both musical and otherwise. Because of this, I would argue that a broader consideration of musical theatre dance would ideally aid in a deeper cultural understanding of not only individual dance routines, but also of specific musicals, and how and why these performance texts ‘work’. Therefore, as part of my own research I have drawn on wider research specifically within the fields of semiotics, genre, audience reception, and performance through the work of Keir Elam (1980), Richard Dyer (1985), Susan Bennett (1997), Daniel Chandler (1997) (2007), David Savran (2004) (2009), and Richard Schechner (2013).

**Practical guides for the creation of musical theatre and its dance**

As part of my broader research into the practical considerations of co-authoring and choreographing a musical, I read three contemporary guides for writing musicals: *How Musicals Work* (Woolford, 2012), *Beating Broadway: How to Create Stories for Musicals That Get Standing Ovations* (Cuden, 2013), and *The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows Are Built* (Viertal, 2016). I was quickly disappointed by their lack of material on dance, with all three texts offering next to no advice on how best to utilise dance in the overall structure of a show. Their primary suggestions seemed to suggest that the placement of dance was very important, and that librettists, composers and lyricists should be
prepared to collaborate with the choreographer and director in order to achieve their visions. Despite this, Woolford includes a mere half page on dance musicals (Woolford, 2012, p. 24) while Cuden has just over a page which is dedicated primarily to the visual role of dance and a very general consideration of where dance numbers might be placed within a narrative (Cuden, 2013, pp. 145-146). Perhaps most concerning is Viertal, who establishes very early in the piece that he will not be focussing on dance at all: “I've not spent a lot of time in these pages talking about dance in any formal way – I don’t feel qualified to do so” (Viertal, 2016, p. xv).

These texts are indicative of a lack of formal structures for the inclusion of dance in musical theatre, with contemporary choreographers regularly citing that their development of new works is more organic, guided by their own pre-existing knowledge based on their experiences as practitioners and as audience members. Insights into current choreographic practices most often seem to be gained through mentoring and observation. Perhaps unsurprisingly some of the most pertinent resources that give insight into current choreographic practices are one-on-one interviews with choreographers and dancers online, many of which are readily available online and have served as part of my own research into the practices of contemporary choreographers. One of the few books on the subject is Lyn Cramer’s excellent Creating Musical Theatre: Conversations with Broadway Directors and Choreographers (Cramer, 2013) which comprises of interviews with twelve different practitioners currently working in the industry. The book delves deep into their individual processes, revealing fascinating insights into the process of creating musical theatre choreography and staging in the modern era. Disappointingly, this book continues the trend of musical theatre dance texts which have a primarily male, Broadway-centric focus. Only one of the practitioners discusses working on the West End, and only two of the twelve practitioners are women. The bias towards male choreographers is one that I have already discussed above, however I feel at this juncture it is worth highlighting once again.

Because dance and choreography are an embodied skill which is often passed down through mentoring and observation and my own background was in choreographing competitive and concert dance, I consulted with several practical written guides specifically for musical theatre choreographers as part of
my own research and praxis. The information in *Choreographing the Stage Musical* (Sunderland & Pickering, 1989) and *Musical Theatre Choreography: A Practical Method for Preparing and Staging Dance in a Musical Show* (Berkson, 1990) might appear dated, but many of the resources they contain were easily adapted to my own contemporary context. In addition, there are no current practical guides for musical theatre dance that are as comprehensive, with both books providing a wealth of knowledge to benefit my praxis as I was creating the choreography for *2084*. Not only do these texts provide insight into the many functions that show dance might be able to perform, they also provide information on how to incorporate dance into the overarching structure of a musical, with Sunderland & Pickering offering a whole (albeit short) chapter regarding how and when to incorporate movement into specific songs (Sunderland & Pickering, 1989, pp. 15-19). Though far from comprehensive, this is infinitely more information than is provided in the guides to writing and directing musicals that I have already referenced above, who merely gloss over the structural and aesthetic considerations of using dance and choreography within a musical.

Sunderland and Pickering’s book is also ideal for the visual choreographer, employing numerous figures to illustrate the use of choreographic conventions including: levels, shapes, pattern and direction; as well as a consideration of how properties, costume, and set can be used to enhance (or hinder) dance and movement. Other areas of interest include suggested systems of notation, studies in using timing and music, preparation for teaching choreography, and methods for polishing routines. Berkson’s text features advice on how to achieve a close reading of the script and score to discover potential choreographic moments, as well as discussions of musical staging including lifts and fight choreography. There is also similar information found in Sunderland and Pickering’s book regarding the structuring of dance routines; another section which deals specifically with properties, costume, scenery and lighting; and several chapters which detail the process of choreographing a show, from casting through to the completion of the final performance.

Despite their strength, perhaps the most striking element in both of these texts is the pervasive sense that the dance and choreography always follow the narrative thrust of a pre-existing book, and is similarly choreographed to pre-existing music and lyrics. There are several issues with this. Firstly, to diminish
the function of show dance to the role of narrative support fails to account the many functions or roles that dance can fulfill within the musical. Additionally, although the interpolation of dance into a pre-existing narrative is certainly one way to create a musical, there is little in these resources that would assist a choreographer who was devising or creating an original work. While these texts provide practical guides for the creation of steps, numbers, and collaborating with members of the design team, both of them ultimately fail to prepare choreographers for the challenges of creative collaboration with composers, book writers, and lyricists in preparation for the creation of new and original musical theatre works.

Overarching Trends in the Literature

At various times throughout its history, historians and critics alike have expressed concern that the musical is dead (Kenrick, The Future?, 2006) (Brantley, The Day The Musical Died, 2006). However, my literature survey suggests that this is certainly not the case. Since the new millennium, the literature surrounding musical theatre has grown substantially. There have been many new histories, critical texts, and creative guides published, and the academic world has begun to question the state of the literature, challenging existing theories and historical biases. Scholars are now embracing all aspects of the musical, including the complex relationship it has with commercialism and artistry. The primary trends I have identified during my review of the literature include:

- A championing of the American musical theatre tradition, privileging Broadway musicals (particularly integrated musicals from the golden age) above all others.
- A bias against musicals that are driven by visual aesthetics and spectacle or are associated with pleasure and commercialism.
- A greater critical focus on integrated and narrative driven dance rather than dance which is utilised to create spectacle and comedy.
- The conflation of dance and song into ‘numbers’, with more critical analysis of song elements in comparison to the dance.
- A reliance on text-based and literary forms of analysis.
• An increasing interest in the role of the audience in the development of the musical, and how musicals work to create meaning, pleasure, and entertainment for them.

Some of the other trends I have identified include: the prevalence of critical analysis of dance on screen with no comparable body of work for stage musicals (due in part to the greater accessibility of film musicals); closer scrutiny of the work of text-based practitioners (especially librettists, composers, and lyricists) in lieu of choreographers; and a larger body of work written by male authors about male practitioners, as evidenced by the need for histories pertaining specifically to female practitioners discussed earlier. While most of these trends have already been identified by previous scholars and are already beginning to be addressed within the literature, there is an ongoing desire from within the field to constructively critique historical norms and methods of analysis. As this constantly evolving artform continues to change, my expectation is that current and future scholars will continue to expand the field into new areas of analysis, not just regarding musical texts, but also the function of specific conventions – including dance.
2.2 Methodologies

Autoethnography

In Chapter One I framed this exegesis by recalling an anecdote of my experience as a young audience member watching the musical *Fame*. That a reasonably short beat within the larger structure of a complex, multi layered artwork should have resonated so strongly with me that it is still impacting on my life, my work, and my research today is indicative of the power that this moment had over me as an audience member. For this reason, before I move into a discussion of praxis I will be reiterating the importance of the autoethnographical perspective to my own research here in the hopes that it will better frame an understanding of my methodologies, and my engagement with theory and practice that has informed my doctoral studies.

Autoethnography has been described as "a research method that uses personal experience ('auto') to describe and interpret ('graphy') cultural texts, experiences, beliefs and practices ('ethno')" (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017, p. 1). Further, it is related both to the practice of autobiographical writing, as well as the field of ethnography, the study of "a culture’s relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences for the purpose of helping *insiders* (cultural members) and *outsiders* (cultural strangers) better understand the culture" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). As a qualitative research method, autoethnography relies on rigorous reflexivity or self-reflection regarding personal experiences in order to better understand a specific culture or cultural phenomenon (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017). It is also generally considered to be either analytic, or evocative, with the former focussing on “developing theoretical explanations of broader social phenomena” (Hughes & Pennington, 2017, p. 102) while the latter is more concerned with emotion, and making the reader more empathetic towards the researcher’s perspective (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 87).

My own research, which is concerned with both theory and praxis, arguably contains elements of both analytic and evocative autoethnography. The analytical component includes my theorisation of how audience expectations might be subverted within the context of the musical utilising dance, while the emotional or evocative side of my research involves a more personal engagement with specific musical theatre texts as an audience member and how
I might achieve similar effects through my own practice. Both led to my desire to further explore the interaction between disruption and dance within the musical from both a theoretical and practical perspective. In the case of this exegesis, the autoethnographic aspect of my research might also be considered a “layered account” where data collection and analysis occur concurrently, as well as a form of “community autoethnography” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). My use of these terms aligns neatly with my overall methodology, including the symbiotic relationship between traditional research and praxis which I will be exploring later in this chapter through my invocation of the iterative cyclic web, and Nelson’s modes of knowing. Community autoethnography might also be used as a framework for discussing my use of human participant research, namely through the gathering of interview data during the workshop and ongoing development of 2084, the anonymous audience surveys that were distributed during the completed production, as well as through the collaborative research that I undertook alongside my academic colleague and creative partner, Sarah Courtis.

As a theoretical frame, autoethnography was particularly attractive to me as a researcher because it was one of the few theoretical approaches that “acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). As a researcher, I recognise that my understanding of the musical theatre genre and its dance has been intrinsically informed by my broader ethnographic context, as well as through a more personal autoethnographical perspective. This includes my responses to the biases that I have identified within the field earlier in this chapter, including the high art/low art debate, as well as the application of musical theatre dance to express elements of culture, gender, race, and sexuality.

While an ethnographical analysis of the musical and its dance might align more closely with a broader sociocultural understanding of these topics, an autoethnographical perspective focus specifically on personal identity, histories and experiences, and how they might affect an individual’s research process.

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14 Interestingly, this is a subject that has seen increased scrutiny since the early 2000s. An increasing body of literature regarding the musical and the development of national identity has been released in the last twenty years, as well as other texts that consider the musical through the lenses of gender, sexuality, and feminism. See (Wolf, 2002), (Jones, 2003), (Knapp, 2005), (Knapp, 2009), (Wolf, 2011).
This differentiation between communal and individual context is not just important to my own engagement with the musical and its dance, it also serves as part of the reasoning for my utilisation of audience reception theory. This is a field that is integral to my own research and is one that I will go into more detail about in Chapter Four. Indeed, one of the key reasons that I believe autoethnography is so integral to the field of musical theatre scholarship, and specifically to an understanding of my own research, is that the relationship between audiences and performance texts can also be read through the same lens:

Communal experience results from the entrainment or synchrony of the audio visual text, while the individual response derives from a personal interpretation of blended stimuli and from subconscious decisions about how to react to the experience of synchrony.

(Taylor, 2012, p. 110)

This audience/text relationship is arguably even more complicated for academics, critics, and practitioners. In Chapter Two I identified some of the biases inherent within the literature in this area, most of which could be argued to be the result of the current culture of critics and academics, as well as the general public. Others might be more personal, but they are still informed in some way by these dominant cultural norms. As suggested by Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Chang:

Research is an extension of researchers’ lives. Although most social scientists have been trained to guard against subjectivity (self-driven perspectives) and to separate self from research activities, it is an impossible task. Scholarship is inextricably connected to self – personal interest, experience, and familiarity.

(Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010)

Musical theatre is a highly subjective field, and one which people often have very strong, personal feelings about. Because of this, I suggest that the concept of subjectivity as espoused by the field of autoethnography is integral to an understanding of the musical genre, and of the scholarship within the area.

There are several legitimate concerns about the use of autoethnography, most of which relate to its perceived focus on the aesthetic, the emotional and the therapeutic, and a corresponding lack of rigorous theoretical analysis, (Ellis,
Adams, & Bochner, 2011). For the musical however, I would suggest that a discussion of its aesthetic form and the emotions it evokes is imperative not only to understanding of the genre, but also specifically of its dance. The musical has explored the human compulsion towards storytelling and emotion through a combination of narrative, movement, and song. It makes sense then, to consider it as an aesthetic form that has specific goals it is trying to achieve. In many cases, this goal is audience pleasure and entertainment, and the work of current scholars in the field echoes the importance of these functions in the ongoing popularity of the musical as a form. As to concerns about a lack of theoretical analysis, this can be combated relatively easily through a consideration of other theories and frameworks that are pertinent to the research being done.

Two other concerns that have been include the reliability of the researcher as a narrator, and the issue of relational ethics. While good autoethnography relies on a certain amount of documentation, most researchers write about their findings long after the initial collection of data. This was certainly the case in my own research, which involved a large pool of data ranging from draft scripts, to choreographic notes, and video interviews with performance participants. In addition, memory can be fallible, leading researchers to write more selectively, focusing on the findings that were most important to them (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). While there are certainly elements of my research process that I have chosen to not focus on within this exegesis, I have attempted to highlight the elements that I feel are the most prudent for my argument. In addition, I was conscious of allowing the data to shape my analytical responses, rather than attempting to fit the data to my own purposes. This can be observed in my frank discussion of the failings of my own praxis, and the sometimes-surprising responses gleaned from our audience surveys.

The idea of relational ethics was also an important consideration for my research, particularly because of the collaborative nature of my praxis. I would consider my work with fellow researcher Sarah Courtis as lyricist and book writer to be a form of community autoethnography, where our individual research outcomes guided and shaped our collaborative research. In addition, our research has doubtless been influenced by our personal and professional relationships to many others:
Researchers do not exist in isolation. We live connected to social networks that include friends and relatives, partners and children, co-workers and students, and we work in universities and research facilities. Consequently, when we conduct and write research, we implicate others in our work.

(Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011)

While we did draw on personal stories to flesh out some of the characters in 2084, this was done in such a way that even if the audience was already aware of these stories beforehand it was unlikely they would be able to connect these elements with us. There were also other ethical considerations regarding the use of human participant research, particularly within our praxis. This included the casting of current students and alumni in the workshop and final production of 2084, as well as our personal and professional relationship to composer Nick Choo. In order to ensure ethical standards were met, two sets of ethical clearance were received from the university, one for the workshop and one for the final performance to ensure the safety of our performers.

Ultimately, while I did develop deeper interpersonal ties with some of our performers by the end of the process, as a choreographer I did not necessarily consider our performers as research subjects, but rather as creative collaborators. Despite our workshop participants having an integral role in the development of my choreography for 2084, my feelings towards them are notably different than the way I feel towards the audience members who completed anonymous surveys. The role of the performers was not merely to implement my choreographic ideas, but also to provide feedback on the entire project. This data was recorded in the form of video interviews and was integral to the development of 2084. The data we received on the completed artefact through audience surveys was simultaneously more individualised, while also being less personal than the responses from our performers. While I have done my best not to let my personal relationships with the performers’ skew analysis of my own process, I acknowledge that it has doubtless had at least some effect. In addition, while my relationship with them was largely positive, the actions of some of the performers made it very difficult to be impartial when discussing their contributions. To counter this bias, I have attempted to keep my analysis focussed on the overall execution of my choreographic vision rather than dwelling on any personal issues I had with individual performances.
Despite these concerns, I feel that the strengths of autoethnography far outweigh the difficulties or concerns listed above. My utilisation of autoethnography as a frame indicates that my research is not merely analytical but is also a deeply personal exploration of the field of musical theatre dance. Whilst I have done my best to be objective about the field, as well as about my own work, I acknowledge that there are certain inherent biases that I may have perpetuated within my research. This does not necessarily mean that my research should be discounted; rather, it suggests a level of self-consciousness which I hope has permeated my studies, affording others the opportunity to better understand my position as a researcher/practitioner. I also believe that both my traditional research and praxis was ultimately enhanced through my association with fellow researcher Sarah Courtis, and that our joint creative collaboration with composer Nick Choo and other members of the creative team that worked on 2084 also enhanced the completed artefact.

Not only did Sarah and I work independently of each other on our areas of interest, we spoke often throughout the many cycles of data collection, analysis, and reflection that constituted our respective research journeys. Our ability to work collaboratively in an even larger creative team can also be evidenced by the positive and constructive criticism that was gathered during the ongoing development of the creative artefact, 2084, as well as the responses to the anonymous surveys that were disseminated to our audience members. While Sarah and I were lucky enough to have a fantastic working partnership, Chapter Five does detail some of the frustrations that I felt when working in collaboration with Nick. My exploration of our working relationship is deeply personal, but also works to consider other perspectives in an analysis of the process of creative praxis. This is a hallmark of my research journey, which aimed to explore elements of both theory and praxis, as well as the analytical and the emotional.

Community Autoethnography

One of the primary benefits that autoethnography has offered my research is its capacity to broaden the scope of my research. During my doctoral candidature I have been afforded some incredible opportunities to travel and engage with musical theatre texts and choreographic practitioners as far afield
as London and New York. Most of these opportunities have come about through my relationship with my primary co-collaborator Sarah, a relationship that can perhaps best be described as a form of “duo-autoethnography” (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). Unlike most PhD students, we embarked upon our research journeys concurrently, and with the aim to combine our expertise in our respective fields, to share academic resources, and to collaborate on a creative artefact. The sense of community that we established and then developed during our doctoral studies built on our previous relationship as friends and creative collaborators during our undergraduate and Honours studies, and only continued to evolve during this time period.

In the discussion of autoethnography, it has been suggested that personal experiences can be used to either “complement, or fill gaps, in existing research” (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017, p. 3). This was certainly the case with my working relationship with Sarah. Our skillsets in the realm of performance have always been complementary, as have our personal interests within the realm of musical theatre. The decision to undertake multiple research trips during our candidature was a collaborative decision, and the selection of musical theatre texts that we chose to engage with during these periods of intense field research included musicals that were often of both personal and academic interest to us both. While the few weeks of field research that we undertook does not alter the fact that as researchers we remain geographically displaced from major musical theatre hubs, even within our own country. But the sense of community that we fostered in our research practices has ultimately had a very positive effect on our research and our contribution to the field.

I am speaking here specifically about the fact that my research, developed in collaboration with Sarah, is something that to my knowledge has not previously been attempted. While 2084 did not begin as a text that was designed to challenge the hegemonic norms that we had observed in other musical theatre texts, however, during the ongoing development and workshopping of the script, our joint interest in the disruption of audience expectations saw us deliberately working to subvert many of the tropes, archetypes, and conventions that we had become familiar with through our engagement with other musical theatre and performance texts. These include important considerations of character and plot,

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15 See Chapter Five.
including the push for race-blind casting and an equal gender balance between the main characters. These elements and many others were inspired in part by the kinds of texts that Sarah and I were engaging with as part of our research (some of which I have listed above and will be returning to in the coming chapters) as well as our own cultural and personal backgrounds. In Chapter Five and the annotated script in the Appendices, these decisions are laid out in more detail.

The model below\textsuperscript{16} was based on the form taken by real life autoethnographical studies involving more two or more researchers and outlines one possible approach to community autoethnography in a research capacity. It accounts for individual and collaborative data collection, analysis, and report writing, with the suggestion being made that communal research might have the capacity to produce a “richer perspective” than that of a solo researcher:

One researcher’s story stirred another researcher’s memory; one’s probing question unsettled another’s assumptions; one’s action demanded another’s reaction. All collaborative autoethnographers as participant-researchers not only made decisions about their research process but also kept themselves accountable to each other.

(Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010)

This was certainly the case for my own research and praxis, both of which were developed alongside my ongoing personal and academic relationship with Sarah. Our research is a prime example of communal autoethnography, where two or more researchers work together using a combination of independent and collaborative group research techniques, and I would suggest that this framework might prove useful for future practitioners within this field as well. The musical by its very nature is an interdisciplinary artform that is reliant on creative collaboration between multiple creatives. There is potentially space within the field then for a consideration of the musical through the lens of communal autoethnography.

\textsuperscript{16} See Figure 1.
Multi Modal Analysis and the Iterative Cyclic Web

From the beginning of my candidature my goal was to consider the relationship between theory and praxis regarding the functions of show dance in the stage musical. As an academic researcher and practitioner, I wanted to know how others had negotiated this relationship, particularly within the world of dance and choreography. This led to a consideration of the current historical and theoretical work currently being done, as well as practical guides for the creation of musical theatre choreography, which I have discussed in my literature review. In order to position my practice in the contemporary moment, field research was also conducted through the consumption of a variety of live and recorded musical theatre texts in Australia, New York, and London\textsuperscript{17}. Many of these shows would serve as inspiration for my own praxis, which involved human participant research in the form of a developmental workshop and final performance of my creative artefact, as well as audience feedback surveys on the completed artefact – 2084.

Because there is no leading framework specifically designed for engaging with musical theatre dance – particularly as a choreographer-practitioner – I have chosen to frame my research within several schools of thought. The first of these which I have already discussed is of course, autoethnography. The second, which

\textsuperscript{17} See Chapter Five.
I will be discussing in the latter half of this chapter, is the wider field of postgraduate dance research, and of creative arts praxis. The third and final framework which I will be discussing in Chapters Three and Four involves a consideration of the musical from a historical and theoretical perspective.

Much like Dorsey whom I have already discussed in the first half of this chapter, there are those within the wider field of dance studies who are concerned about creative praxis being hindered by theory. Kim Vincs suggests that beginning dance praxis with a specific goal or methodology places too great an emphasis on the finished product, and not on the process of creation (Vincs, 2007, pp. 101, 103). Conversely, Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean propose that there is no real reason why praxis and theory cannot coexist within the creative arts:

Creative practitioners have sometimes argued that theorisation or documentation of the creative process risk subduing the creative fire or reducing the range of responses to their work. But such arguments reinforce the mystification of the creative artist and romantic ideas about the spontaneity of the creative process.

(Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 25)

Smith and Dean suggest that the relationship between practice and theory might be complementary rather than contradictory – a view that is corroborated if we consider the creative arts from a post-structuralist perspective as Stephen Farrier does. Indeed, Farrier posits that “‘making’ is not empty of thinking in ways that could be considered theoretical, and that thinking is not devoid of a form of creativity” (Farrier, 2005, p. 130).

This view is also echoed in the work of Robin Nelson, with his model for creative arts praxis making apparent one way that the relationship between theory and praxis might be realised. Nelson’s diagram for modes of knowing elucidates how knowledge might contribute to creative arts research in a variety of different ways including know-how or prior knowledge, know-what or critical knowledge, and know-that or theoretical knowledge. This model considers the importance of implicit knowledge in arts praxis, as well as the role of critical reflection and theoretical knowledge. It also acknowledges the fluid, cyclical

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18 See Figure 2.
relationship between theory and praxis set forth by Farrier as a means of breaking from traditional triangular or pyramid models (Farrier, 2005, p. 131).

Another model for creative praxis that has heavily informed my research is Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web. This model unpacks the complicated relationship between practice-led research, research-led practice, and academic research, focussing on the interplay of various factors including idea generation, creative practice, traditional research, and the potential form that creative outputs might take\(^\text{19}\). Within the iterative cyclic web, Smith and Dean explore the concept of research-led practice and how this term has been designed in part to complement practice-led research. The suggestion here is that scholarly research might serve as the basis for praxis (and perhaps the creation of artefacts) and has the capability to influence the creation of new artistic fields, just as non-academic practice does in a professional environment (Smith & Dean, 2009, pp. 7-8). This aligns creative arts research with other areas including the sciences, where the practical application of knowledge often leads to new areas of study.

The flexible nature of Nelson, and Smith and Dean’s models appealed to me, as did the fact that neither suggested that imposing a research methodology would automatically stifle or hinder any resulting creative outputs. As a researcher I am cognizant of the fact that praxis which is unencumbered by traditional forms of research can have both positive and negative implications. Further, I understand and acknowledge why creative practitioners might view this as a concern. The lack of traditional strictures might lead to more freedom and experimentation during praxis, but knowledge of traditional forms and theories can also be vital in guiding the praxis of researchers – as it was with my own. I believe that this must be taken on a case by case basis depending on individual research aims, and that scholar-practitioners should be cognizant of the fact that their research may take them to new areas and unknown conclusions which they had not previously considered, just as mine did.

\(^{19}\) See Figure 3.
Both models also highlight a major element of creative inquiry that is pertinent to my own research: the negotiation between traditional and praxis-based research. The appeal of Nelson’s modes of knowing and Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web is in part due to their encouragement of a multi-modal research approach. For musical theatre, an interdisciplinary art form which relies on many different skill sets, these models are representative of the collaborative nature of the genre in the real world. In addition, the musical has only seen a substantial scholarly heritage emerge over the last two decades, with the field previously being shaped largely by practitioners, audiences, and critics rather

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20 Nelson uses the terms PaR and PLR interchangeably so arguably this model could be applied to any form of creative arts praxis, as indicated by the central focus of arts praxis.
than theoreticians. Currently, the insights gained from theoretical and academic explorations into this field are still tentative and uncertain. Thus, for my own research, the creation of a new musical theatre work was as integral a component of my contribution to knowledge as my discussions of history and theory.

Figure 3 – The Iterative Cyclic Web

(Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 20)
Praxis and Research

While I have discussed the relationship between praxis and traditional academic research above, I feel it is necessary at this time to further elucidate some of these terms as there is considerable and ongoing debate regarding the use of terminologies relating to praxis and research. Not only is there a wide array of terminologies being used, the differences in their meaning often depends on the geographical location of the academic sphere in which they are being explored. There is further confusion surrounding the use of praxis related terms due to the fact that many of them are used interchangeably with each other (Candy, 2006, p. 3). In Farrier’s consideration of the word praxis in relation to academic research, he identifies it as having a dual meaning. He distinguishes between: 1) praxis as a synonym of practice, “a form of habitual action, accepted practice or custom”; and 2) practice and its ability to “transform theoretical concepts and considerations into shared physical activity” (Farrier, 2005, p. 129). Within my own research I encompass elements of both definitions, with a stronger focus on the latter due to the recognition of the relationship between theory and practice. Within the context of my own studies, praxis relates not only to the act of creating choreography, but also the ways in which my prior knowledge of practice and my traditional academic research has informed my work as a creator. Below I will be exploring some of the most common definitions of praxis related terms, in order to better position my own research and foreground my understanding of praxis.

Practice as research and Practice-led research

There is some difference in opinion amongst scholars as to the difference between these two terms. Definitions of ‘practice as research’ and ‘practice-led research’ tend to differ from location to location. Baz Kershaw, for instance, proposed that ‘practice as research’ is research which is conducted into performance practices (Kershaw, 2001, p. 138) whereas Lauren Redhead suggests that it might entail artistic practice or the creation of an artefact which does not require a written exegesis to explain it with “all of the knowledge and understanding generated by the project arises from the practice itself” (Redhead, 2012). A British perspective, elucidated by Robin Nelson, suggests:
PaR involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice\textsuperscript{21} [...] is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry.

(Nelson, 2013, pp. 8-9)

It is important to note that Nelson’s use of the term ‘practice as research’ here is synonymous with practice-led research. Nelson’s belief is that the term practice-led might suggest that knowledge follows practice, but the nature of praxis implies that there must be at least some form of prior knowledge of practice, and how it might relate to other forms of research. By contrast, Smith and Dean suggest that ‘practice as research’ can be considered separate from ‘practice-led research’ because the latter constitutes a form of creative practice which must involve the creation of an artefact, supported by appropriate documentation and theorisation whereas the former might not (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 5). Essentially, it is all a question of how these terms are interpreted. Linda Candy suggests that ‘practice-led research’ “is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice” (Candy, 2006, p. 3). In addition, she proposes that the primary focus of ‘practice-led research’ is “to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within a practice” (Candy, 2006, p. 3). This allows for what Redhead calls a “privileged interior perspective” on the interactions between individuals and groups within society through creative arts practice (Redhead, 2012).

Within the field of musical theatre scholarship, I propose that ‘practice as research’ and ‘practice-led research’ might be concerned with the process of practice (whether as a writer, choreographer, performer etcetera) and the subsequent study of these processes. Further, I would argue that one means of differentiating between them might be to position them using Smith and Dean’s example of process/goal orientated research (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 23). In this instance, ‘practice as research’ would be process-orientated by virtue of its focus on practice as a research method. In this case any artefact is more likely to be a reasonably self-contained entity which requires less exegetical support – as posited above by Redhead. There may also be situations where during the research process where the quality or achievements of the artefact becomes less

\textsuperscript{21} By which he means an artefact.
important than the process of creating it. In this case, the practice (or process) forms the bulk of the research, and any resultant artefacts might be considered of secondary importance to the discoveries made during its creation. By contrast, ‘practice-led research’ might be considered more goal-orientated, where there is a clear objective to use practice to achieve a specific end point/s. This type of research might include the creation of an artefact/s as well as the development of “an appropriate experimental and analytical methodology, specific to the medium in which the practice takes place, and grounded in an understanding of the historical and theoretical disciplinary context in which it is located” (Jolly, 2019). During research that utilises praxis, it is conceivable that the work being produced might also move between these definitions as the outcomes and findings alter the course of the research.

**Practice-based research**

Redhead suggests that the knowledge and understanding generated during ‘practice-based research’ takes place predominantly through the act of praxis, rather than through traditional forms of academic research (Redhead, 2012). However, Linda Candy disagrees, suggesting that practice-based research is:

> An original investigation undertaken to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artefacts […] whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to those outcomes.

(Candy, 2006, p. 3)

This aligns with my findings above, with ‘practice as research’ and ‘practice-led research’ providing a much stronger focus on the creative praxis, whether the creative process or the potential outcomes in the form of artefact/s. ‘Practice-based research’ suggests that while practice is still an important element of the research, there is a more equal balance between praxis and traditional academic enquiry. This balance is important as not only does it help to differentiate between research which focuses more heavily on praxis (including practice as research
and practice-led research), but also helps to counter any apprehension from within the academy that creative arts praxis requires less academic rigour than traditional research methods.

This is not to say that all creative arts praxis requires a significant amount of academic research and insight in order to contribute to knowledge, merely that the balance between creative praxis and traditional academic enquiry allows for a certain degree of creative expression while also working to maintain academic standards. This is a legitimate concern from within institutions and academies, and it is also pertinent for my own research into musical theatre dance due to the subjective and phenomenological nature of the form. It has been suggested that research involving creative arts praxis might ultimately yield new ways of exploring knowledge which may benefit other fields beyond the creative arts (Kershaw, 2001, p. 138). Within my field, a more even balance between praxis and traditional forms of research and a renewed focus on dance as a convention might indeed yield new insights into dance, entertainment, and live performance, as well as film.

Praxis and Research in Postgraduate Dance Studies

The terminologies in this area are still developing, and there is still much debate regarding the differences between them. Linda Candy suggests that one of the easiest ways to differentiate between practice-based and practice-led research is to consider the relation of praxis, research, and the role of the creative artefact:

If a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based. If the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-led.

(Candy, 2006, p. 3)

Within the broader field of arts praxis, I feel that my own understanding of these terms is best elucidated by Candy’s work. When it comes to the field of dance, and specifically show dance however, I found that there is little if any research which considers musical theatre dance from both a theoretical and practical perspective. Accordingly, I have had to draw on other areas of dance scholarship
in order to explore the intersection between praxis and theory within postgraduate dance studies.

My understanding in this area was greatly aided by the handbook *Dancing between Diversity and Consistency: Refining Assessment in Postgraduate Degrees in Dance* (Phillips, Stock, & Vincs, 2009). This guidebook specifically explores postgraduate research in dance within my own context here in Australia, and although the authors are primarily concerned with contemporary dance practices, their conclusions are just as pertinent to my own area. Their work echoes what I have already covered above: that ‘practice as research’ and ‘practice-led research’ are more focussed on process rather than product, and that although ‘practice-based research’ finds practice at the heart of the research process (and indeed practice may be an important element of the methodologies employed) the practice may ultimately not end up being a part of the examinable component due to the focus shifting to the theoretical or exegetical component (Phillips, Stock, & Vincs, 2009, p. 12).

In the case of my own research, the artefact (in this case the choreography for 2084) was not concerned as much with the process, but how the theories I was exploring might be perceived by audiences. The work was informed by theoretical and historical research, which in turn shaped my praxis, and which in turn shaped the ongoing creation and analysis of my choreography, as well as the questions that were eventually put to the audience. For my own research, it was important to balance the relationship between my theoretical and practical knowledge, and to not only look at other works, but also the creation of future works as well. For this reason, I was interested not only in multi-modal forms of musical theatre analysis, but also in the multi-modal nature of praxis.

**Summary of Approaches**

My research approach can be best summarised as being multi-modal. Not only have I done traditional academic research, I have also conducted field research, and human participant research, with each element necessarily influencing the other at any given time – as in Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web. This combination of research styles has afforded me a thorough exploration of the subject area, not just from a historical, theoretical, or analytical perspective,
but also through the development and performance of an original musical theatre text and subsequent analysis of audience feedback. In order to show a contribution to knowledge – not only within my own local context but on an international scale – it became necessary to not only study pre-existing histories and theories, but also look to the future of musical theatre from a practical and theoretical perspective.

I would classify the initial workshop I conducted for 2084 as a form of practice as research. This element of my overall developmental process was less concerned with the final product, but rather in exploring some of my initial choreographic ideas. It was also a means of exploring how my choreography might work as part of a much larger whole. The ensuing development of the choreography including the rehearsal process and the performance of the resulting artefact could be seen to be practice-based. My choreographic work could also be research-led practice, as elucidated in Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web. Not only did my traditional academic research inform my choreographic process, my practice then influenced the way that I interacted with and related to written and performative texts. In addition, my praxis was strongly influenced by my prior knowledge or ‘know-how’ regarding the creation and development of a musical and its choreography.

The distinctions I have drawn between the different phases of my research above are not necessarily all-encompassing terms that perfectly encapsulate my research journey. At any given time, my research (both practical and academic) might have fitted into several of the categories in Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web or been informed by several of Nelson’s modes of knowing. I have included these models specifically to elucidate the ever-shifting relationship of theory and praxis within my research process, and how this model led to new and sometimes surprising insights for me both as an academic researcher and choreographic practitioner. This relationship between theory and praxis continues to evolve even as I collate and analyse my research findings as part of my final exegesis. My hope is that this combination of theorisation, documentation, and praxis – as suggested by Smith and Dean (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 5) – might yield some new insight into the relationship between theory and praxis within the area of musical theatre, and specifically in relation to the role of dance within it.
CHAPTER THREE – HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

This chapter provides a historical overview of the major artistic movements regarding show dance within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. There is a specific focus on key choreographic practitioners and musical theatre texts that worked to establish show dance, as well as specific discussions regarding the use of dance as a disruptive or disjunctive force.

So, what exactly is musical theatre dance? What are the functions it performs? And how does it achieve these goals in conjunction with other musico-dramatic elements within the frame of an interdisciplinary art form like the musical? As discussed earlier, my focus within this thesis is primarily concerned with the subversion of audience expectations by exploiting specific genre conventions and traditional modes of performativity relating to show dance. My hypothesis was that because show dance has traditionally been utilised to create pleasure, entertainment, and humour, the ability to create dramatic or even tragic effects using show dance is a direct subversion of audience expectations. My praxis involved me taking this hypothesis and attempting to realise this within a practical setting. In 2084 I attempted to utilise traditional conventions of musical theatre dance to juxtapose the artifice of performance against a serious, dramatic storyline, and to evoke themes of subjugation and control through dance rather than as a means of joyous self-expression.

In order to subvert audience expectations however, there must be an understanding of what these expectations might be. After all: “creative work emerges from a sound tradition. Even the artistic decision to reject the past acknowledges acquaintance with what is to be rejected” (Kislan, 1987, p. 176). In order to better understand cultural perceptions of musical theatre dance, my research into the history of the genre had to go back to the roots of the modern musical, identifying not only the functions of dance that have been identified, but also how the role of show dance has shifted over time. In this chapter I will be identifying some of the major creative and ideological shifts that have occurred during the history of the musical, including a survey of the influence of major dance styles and the choreographic practitioners that were working during this time. This will ideally position my own research within a broader context while also highlighting specific dances, choreographers, and practices that have ultimately informed my own research and practice.
Establishing the Form – From Aristotle to Robbins

1500s-1800s – Classical Drama, Court Ballets, and Opera (or, early music theatre forms and their links to the aristocracy and high art)

The development of the modern musical and its dance owes much of its heritage to the major forms of music theatre that came before it. Most musical theatre histories begin with Greek theatre, touching on Roman theatre, the liturgical dramas and travelling performers of the medieval and middle ages, and then move swiftly onto the Renaissance, in part due to the massive cultural and artistic development that occurred during this time period. During this time period there was a renewed interest in classical forms of drama (Kenrick, 2008, p. 28) and the critical discourses surrounding the arts (Sorell, 1981, pp. 53, 258-259). Many plays and court entertainments during the Renaissance featured songs and dances, with popular music theatre forms including masques, spectacles, and court ballets. Sorrell discusses the function of dance in these performances in Dance In Its Time, namely the use of social and court dances to create spectacle, entertainment, and sometimes serve as ritual or a form of celebration. This is not to say that was no deeper meaning or thought process behind the use of dance in popular music theatre entertainments during this time. The work of Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx, an important choreographer for French court ballets in the late 1500s, utilised religious and mathematical symbolism in the creation of his choreography (Sorell, 1981, p. 10). Descriptions of his work also calls to mind future musical theatre practitioners like Busby Berkeley and Florenz Ziegfeld, specifically in their use of military style precision and complex patterning.

As the early modern period gives way to the modern era, we see the emergence of various artforms that would prove integral to the development of the musical. This included opera, a pre-cursor and distant cousin to the modern musical, and classical ballet which currently forms the theoretical and technical basis for most forms of concert dance in the western world. Originally a popular form of court entertainment, opera emerged from Italy in the late sixteenth century and quickly spread across Europe (Kenrick, 2008, p. 28). Ballet also originated out of court entertainments, with the codification of the form occurring in France first under the patronage of King Louis XIV, and later Pierre Beauchamp around 1700 (Chujoy & Manchester, 1967, pp. 83, 460-461). The intersection of these two art forms would lead to the advent of Opéra-ballet (Sorell, 1981, p. 164) but
it would be some time before this form would achieve the kind of narrative integration theorised by Richard Wagner in the 1800s. In fact, the use of ballet in early operas was closer in spirit to the divertissements used in early musical comedies than the narrative driven ballets we are more familiar with today. Much like the songs and dances in the court entertainments that preceded the advent of opera, the dance sequences within Opéra-ballet were primarily designed to intersperse the narrative to create pleasure and entertainment for audiences, with Sorrell suggesting that it was often unclear as to “whether the ballet was there to frame the operatic scenes, or vice versa” (Sorell, 1981, p. 164). The use of narrative driven dance is instead linked to another form of music theatre – the pantomime.

Designed to entertain the lower classes, the modern pantomime is a culturally and historically significant art form that is still seen as an entertaining but ultimately low-brow form of entertainment (Kenrick, 2008, p. 29). Pantomime traditionally occupies a much lower artistic status than opera, in part because the use of dance in most pantomimes was self-professed grotesque dancing. The exception to the rule was John Weaver, a British ballet master who utilised mime and dumb show to explicate narratives within his pantomime ballets in the hope that pantomime might be considered a more legitimate art form. Weaver’s “scenical” dancing in the early eighteenth century is an important precursor to the work of Jean-Georges Noverre, whose ballet d’action went on to influence the development of narrative driven ballets in the nineteenth century (Sorell, 1981, p. 170). Weaver’s work might therefore be considered one of the earliest precursors to the integrated dance musicals of the twentieth century.

While ballet was an integral part of early music theatre forms, contemporary show dance shares its heritage not only with court spectacles, ballets and opera from Europe, but also the cultural melting pot of colonial America (Kislan, 1987, p. 3). Operetta, a sub-genre of comic opera was a lighter and more romantic form of music theatre that satirised operatic conventions to great comedic effect. It also often featured popular social dances instead of ballet – an important stylistic departure from opera that indicates the popularity of social dance not just in Europe, but also in colonial America during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Notable dance figures in the realm of operetta included John D’Auban (1842-1922), a British dancer and choreographer who worked
extensively on the West End. As the dancing master at the Theatre Royal in London, he worked almost exclusively on Gilbert and Sullivan’s operettas, and is remembered for creating dances that were designed to fit the plot as well as reveal elements of character through performance (Kenrick, Dance in Stage Musicals, 2004).

1700s-1900s – Ballad Opera, and Revue Formats (or, later music theatre forms and their links to low art)

Although operatic forms (opera, operetta) were popular during this time period, smaller scale revue-style forms also flourished from approximately the mid-1700s to the mid-twentieth century in both Britain and America. It is specifically out of this tradition that we begin to see conventions emerging that would go on to directly shape the musical theatre genre. One of the most important of these is the creation of music theatre forms designed for the lower and middle classes. Although pantomime had previously served as a light-hearted alternative to the serious nature of opera, there had been little in the way of self-consciously political works on the music theatre stage. This would come in the form of the ballad opera, specifically John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera (1728) which interpolated a variety of melodies and lyrics inspired by the popular entertainments of the day. Although the ballad opera form would shy away from blatantly political content after Gay, his use of operatic conventions to highlight the worst aspects of London’s high society is remarkably similar to Bertolt Brecht’s The Three-Penny Opera (1928), or Blitzstein’s The Cradle Will Rock (1937). In this way, The Beggar’s Opera might be considered an important forerunner to some of the best-known political musicals of the twentieth century, as well as to my own praxis.

Another recognisable convention that emerged during this time period was the image of the showgirl, popularised in part by popular melodrama The Black Crook (1866) whose scantily clad “ballerinas” were an integral component of its impressively long run (Kenrick, 2008, p. 66). The showgirl was an integral element of early music theatre, a sure fire way to sell tickets in a business that favoured shows that were designed to keep up with changing fashions: “enjoyed today then eclipsed by something else and forgotten tomorrow” (Kenrick, 2008,
Some of the most popular forms of music theatre entertainment among the lower classes during this time period included minstrelsy, British music hall, American variety, burlesque, and vaudeville. While music hall and variety were born of a desire to combine theatre and alcohol that occurred roughly concurrently on both sides of the Atlantic, burlesque was a British form of social satire that was ultimately co-opted by Americans. Minstrelsy and vaudeville are decidedly more American forms, with the former serving as one of the earliest examples of a uniquely American form of music theatre and the latter being the most direct predecessor to the dance styles that would come to dominate musical theatre.

One of the earliest examples of a uniquely American form of music theatre, Minstrelsy (1750s-1900s) employed the use of stock characters as well as singing, dancing, and physical comedy to entertain audiences. It is also the only form of music theatre specifically rooted in blatant displays of xenophobia, racism and bigotry, specifically towards African American peoples. Blackface performers were popular from at least the mid-1700s: however, the first professional minstrel groups appeared in America during the 1840s (Kenrick, 2008, pp. 52-53). As a music theatre form, minstrelsy had a marked cultural impact, allowing white Americans the opportunity to experience music and dance inspired by African cultures, especially in the wake of the American Civil War (Kislan, 1987, pp. 12-14). Although the wider social damage caused by minstrelsy is still being felt today, the formal innovations of minstrelsy cannot be denied. At the height of their popularity, professional minstrel shows established a well-articulated, flexible performance structure which could be tailored to the individual talents of their troupe members. Divided into three acts, minstrelsy performances involved specific routines including group and solo song and/or dance numbers, jokes, skits, oratory, acrobatics, and slapstick comedy (Kenrick, 2008, pp. 53-54). The organisation of these routines into a recognisable format can also be observed in other forms of revue style music theatre that developed in the 1840s, including music hall and variety (Kislan, 1987, p. 22).

Dance was considered an integral element of minstrelsy. The quality and notoriety of the dance was key to its popularity, and one of the best talent combinations for a minstrel performer was a banjoist/dancer (Kislan, 1987, pp. 15-17). After the American Civil War, as black minstrel troupes became more
popular, minstrel show dance became: “a hybrid, derivative style, based on Northern white idealized or comic interpretations of plantation life” (Kislan, 1987, p. 18). It included steps that incorporated strutting, shuffling feet, and energetic kicks, as well as promenading dances like walkarounds and the cakewalk, a dance contest for couples attempting to “outdo each other in the mock imitation of the white man’s manner and behaviour” (Kislan, 1987, p. 19). The cakewalk is still utilised as a metaphor for race relations within the United States, most notably in the ‘Lion Dance’ in *Pacific Overtures* (1976) where Patricia Birch blended Japanese Kabuki with American cakewalk to comment on the political relationship between the two nations (McMillin, 2006, pp. 204-205), and Graciela Daniele’s choreography for *Ragtime* (1998) which also utilises the cakewalk to comment on white, upper class privilege and the appropriation of African American art. This is one example of dance that disrupts audience expectations, relying on a degree of cultural understanding of minstrelsy and its dance styles in order to comment on contemporary issues of race.

Of course, the dance that emerged from this time did not merely extend to styles derived from African American peoples. The cultural melting pot of colonial America which birthed the development of minstrelsy also saw “jigs, clogs and hornpipes” from as far afield as Ethiopia and Ireland (Kislan, 1987, p. 20). It has been theorised by numerous historians including Kislan, Seibart, and Hill that it was the marriage of African dance styles and clog dancing brought by European immigrants that led to the creation of tap dancing. One of the first pioneers of tap was William Henry Lane, better known as Master Juba (ca.1825 –ca.1852) and the movements and steps he specialised in would go on to become staples of Broadway style tap (Kislan, 1987, p. 22). Perhaps unsurprisingly, tap dancing became much more popular and mainstream after white performers co-opted the form in much the same way that white composers tapped into the rhythms of ragtime, jazz, and blues music.

As mentioned above, Music Hall (1840s-1940s) in Britain and Variety (1840s-1880s) in America both largely developed out of a desire to combine live theatre with alcohol. These shows tended to follow a revue style format with little to no narrative links between the acts. Their goal was entertainment – with emphasis often placed on the lewd, and the sexual (Kenrick, *Musicals On Stage: A Capsule History*, 2003). Bawdy songs, comic acts, dance routines and even
circus acts were presented at the pleasure of those who managed the theatres, often little more than glorified bars and saloons. Burlesque (1840s-1960) began as a form of British music theatre that was more politically sophisticated than music hall. Its primary function was to satirise, mock, or parody social mores and current events. To ‘burlesque’ something was to make fun of it, a disrespectful form of parody that allowed the lower and middle classes to poke fun at the upper classes and the popular entertainments that they enjoyed.

Despite not being considered as raunchy as music hall and variety, burlesque still relied on the presence of beautiful women in revealing costumes to sell tickets. In the 1860s, a series of British burlesque troupes toured the United States, and by the 1870s the Americans were putting on their own burlesque extravaganzas, with a strong focus on spectacle over satire. It was also around this time that the primarily female managed business of burlesque began to be usurped by male managers like Michael B. Leavitt (1843-1935) and a shift began to occur that downplayed the subtler wit and parodic nature of burlesque in favour of ever more revealing costumes (Kenrick, Burlesque, 2003). The ongoing evolution of burlesque resulted in American burletta, extended skits bookended with specialty of variety acts, with the skits mocking popular entertainment and social topics. In the 1920s, burlesque theatres in the United States began to shut down and in a last-ditch attempt to survive they began offering strip tease. Ongoing legal crackdowns led to the last burlesque theatres in America being closed in the 1930s, but historians like Kenrick suggest that by this time most shows were offering little more than vulgar strip routines and bad comedy (Kenrick, Burlesque - Part II, 2003). The legacy of burlesque, once a form of biting social satire, became relegated to ‘bump and grind’ routines made glamorous with feathers and rhinestones.

Vaudeville (1880s-1930s) dominated the American stage for several decades, spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, providing a link between older forms of popular music theatre and the modern musical and paving the way for the early development of show dance – what we now know as musical theatre dance. Kislan suggests that vaudeville “encouraged, if not precipitated, the quantitative and varietal expansion of dance acts before the public” and that the form both “valued uniqueness and encouraged diversity” (Kislan, 1987, p. 24). This is reflected in the sheer number of ethnic or folk dances
that flooded the vaudeville stage, a by-product of the massive influx of European immigrants to America during this time, as well as the popularity of African-American dance and music styles among white audiences (Kislan, 1987, pp. 38-39). The influence of ethnic and folk dancing styles on show dance would continue well into the twentieth century, allowing the hybridisation of social, commercial, and concert dance forms.

Although documentation pertaining to dance in popular forms of music theatre during this time is generally poor, Kislan goes into some detail about vaudevillian dance specialties in *Hooting on Broadway*. Dance in vaudeville was primarily designed to create entertainment for an audience, normally achieved through some combination of spectacle, technical prowess, and comedy. Two forms that were particularly focussed on comedy were eccentric dance which used the inherent physical characteristics of the performer\(^{22}\), and comic dance which involved actors creating their own stock character/s\(^{23}\). The distinction between eccentric and comic dance can perhaps be best summarised as: “the eccentric was funny for what he was while the comic was funny for what he did” (Kislan, 1987, p. 28).

Acrobatic dance, as the name suggests, required a great amount of flexibility and strength, although Kislan suggests that there were also elements of it which tended towards the sexual or the vulgar. Generalised contortion was popular, as was legomania, which involved movements such as high kicks and leg mounts, and tandem acts with duos specialising in difficult partnered lifts, often interspersed with balletic or ballroom inspired movement (Kislan, 1987, pp. 29-30). Husband and wife vaudeville team Vernon and Irene Castle were but one duo who were famous for bringing their own performative flair to ballroom dance on the vaudeville circuit (Kislan, 1987, p. 30).

Ballet also inspired another important vaudeville dance specialty – toe dancing. Despite being based at least in part on classical ballet traditions, toe dancing was more about the kinds of gimmicks that could be performed *en pointe* rather than in bringing ballet to the vaudeville stage (Kislan, 1987, p. 35). The final, and perhaps most enduring of all vaudeville dance specialties, was tap.

\(^{22}\) Ray Bolger, with his long limbs and rubbery legs was a noted eccentric dancer.

\(^{23}\) Not dissimilar to the convention of using stock characters found in *commedia dell'arte*, minstrelsy, and music hall.
vaudeville stage saw the emergence of many famous tap dancers including Eleanor Powell (1912-1982), and Fred Astaire (1899-1987). Tap has since come to be one of the most recognisable forms of traditional show dance, a symbol of the Hollywood musical and the golden age of musical theatre. The ongoing popularity of new musical comedies and revivals over the last three decades has helped to maintain the place of tap as an important element of show dance.

One of the less influential but no less important dance styles found on the vaudeville stage was ethnic or folk dance. These dances came from immigrants as far afield as Russia, India, and Europe, though Kislan suggests that they were probably less than authentic representations of the dances they were based on (Kislan, 1987, p. 38). The popularity of ethnic forms in music theatre had already been an integral part of the development of minstrelsy, but in the decades yet to come the influence of ethnic dance styles on show dance would result in it becoming an integral part of the musical theatre genre (Kislan, 1987, p. 39).

1900s-1920s – Dance Directors & Precision Dance

Around the turn of the century there was huge cultural shift in America, including in popular entertainments. The popularity of ragtime, jazz and blues introduced through minstrelsy and other form of popular music led to new dance crazes like the Charleston and the Black Bottom. Around 1910, composers in Tin Pan Alley standardised the 32-bar AABA song structure which would become the norm for popular music as well as show tunes (Kenrick, 1900-1910: "Skipping a Beat, Singing a Dream", 2014). Many of the composers working in Tin Pan Alley would go on to shape the sound of musicals to come, and the dances that would accompany them. Most musicals at this time generally lacked strong narrative arcs, with the focus primarily on creating entertainments that would allow shows to turn a healthy profit. As a result, most show dance at this time was designed to “distract, entertain, titillate, or stop the show” (Graves, 2001, p. 2): an avenue to applause and audience approval and little more. At this time, most songs and dances had little or no connection to elements of plot or character and were often devices to employ the skills of a star performer, or to create visual spectacles that would dazzle and entertain:
The recipe for commercial success included the following ingredients: (1) popular stars, (2) beautiful girls, (3) comedy, (4) memorable songs, and (5) dance numbers that stopped the show. The producers bought the ingredients; dance directors arranged them in an attractive package. The system bound everyone involved to the endless quest for novelty.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 41)

Audiences seemed to respond well to “machinelike uniformity” and many dance directors utilised simple steps along with “a kaleidoscopic array of geometric patterns” (Kislan, 1987, p. 43). The role of the dance-director then, was the antithesis of the contemporary director-choreographers whose goal is to use motivated movement to advance the performance. Instead, the dance-directors modus operandi was ultimately to create disruption through sheer entertainment: “If the routine stopped the show? Good. If the audience demanded an encore? Better still. What the modern director-choreographer seeks to advance, the dance director sought to interrupt” (Kislan, 1987, p. 43).

Despite the important role that dance played in creating visual spectacle and entertainment for the audience, Kislan suggests that most chorus girls had little to no training and (at least initially) were primarily selected for their looks. This began to change when British businessman and musical theatre director John Tiller (1854-1925) brought his chorus girls from England to America in the early 1900s (Kenrick, Dance in Stage Musicals, 2004). Already renowned across Europe for their work in pantomime and operetta, the Tiller Girls performed in taps or on toe, performing moves that relied on military style repetition, geometric patterning, and the eponymous kick line to create spectacular visual effects (Kislan, 1987, pp. 44-45). We now know this style as precision dance, a visually appealing style that was quick and simple to teach. This was a key consideration when many chorines had little to no formalised training and rehearsal periods were notoriously short. Under the guiding influence of the Tiller tradition, chorus routines quickly became formulaic:

Formula dances reigned. Imagination meant a new approach to the formula. The choreographic principles adhered to become the musical staging clichés of the century. Custom demanded strict adherence to tempo, beat, or musical phrasing. Custom demanded that tempo
be accelerated near the end of a number to drive home the big finish. Custom demanded that the dance idea evolve from the lyric. For the dance director "research" meant "study the lyric" so that during rehearsal, a plausible routine could be built around it. [...] Producers valued dances with immediate impact on the public.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 173)

One of these producers was Florenz Ziegfeld (1867-1932) a man remembered as much for his numerous extra-marital affairs as he was for his elegant chorus girls and lavish production values. Ziegfeld first began producing music theatre in the late 1800s, but it was not until 1907 that he followed the suggestion of French performer Anna Held and began producing his own variety/revue style show similar to the *Folies-Bergère* in Paris (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, p. 61). The resulting revues were produced almost annually for almost twenty years, with his legacy continuing well after his death. While there were many revues that were popular during this time, it is Ziegfeld's work that tends to define the style of this era. His productions were choreographed by a series of dance-directors who each left their own mark on the musical including Julian Mitchell (1851-1926) and Bobby Connolly (1897-1944). Credited with inventing the production number and popularising the use of tap dancing in music theatre respectively, Mitchell and Connolly are just two of the many dance-directors who were working during this time (Kenrick, Who's Who in Musicals: M to Mi, 2003) (Kislan, 1987, p. 56).

Ned Wayburn (1874-1942) is perhaps one of the most important, in terms of the Ziegfeld style. He is credited with inventing the iconic Ziegfeld Walk, a signature movement style which allowed dancers to gracefully descend a flight of stairs whilst wearing cumbersome headgear. He also developed his own style of dance notation, one of the only forms of notation specific to show dance, and had a specific structure in which he arranged his routines involving a sequence of ten steps:

Step One was the entrance, a travelling step to bring the dancers onto the stage; Steps Two through Nine were a combination of eight steps and kicks executed in a variety

of angles; and Step Ten was the exit step, designed to climax the routine for audience applause.

(Kislan, 1987, pp. 42-43)

Wayburn is also known for his use of symmetrical patterning and military style precision, the way he divided his dancers into categories based on their physical attributes, and the inventory of “kicks, turns, and poses” he created and utilised within his choreography (Kislan, 1987, pp. 48-52).

Another well-known choreographer of the 1920s and 30s was Busby Berkeley (1895-1976). A protégé of Ziegfeld, Berkeley got his start working as a dance-director on stage musicals in the 1920s but is better known for his film work. Hallmarks of his style include the use of beautiful chorines, spectacular sets, precision dance, kaleidoscopic overhead shots, as well as the innovative use of camera movements to highlight the intricacies of his choreography, as in 42nd Street (1933). Although his work created fabulous visual spectacles, Berkeley certainly was not one to shy away from experimentation when it came to his choreography. Dance-director LeRoy Prinz had already disrupted audience expectations regarding the unison of the chorus line by allowing his dancers to dance their own steps at the end of a routine (Kislan, 1987, p. 174), but Berkeley utilised several different methods to subvert expectations. One was the addition of a petite character dancer onto the end of the chorus line, creating a comedic effect by their struggle to keep up with the rest of the dancers (Kislan, 1987, p. 174). Another involved setting routines to a different time signature to the actual music, “creating the novel aural sensation of a dance filled with shifting accents and interesting syncopations” (Kislan, 1987, p. 56).

Although precision dancing dominated the musical stage for much of this era, early show dance was not limited to pretty chorines and kick lines. The popularity of male dancers provided a masculine alternative to the show girl image, and black vaudeville performers pioneered some of the earliest black musicals on Broadway. We can also see the first recorded evidence of choreographic practitioners discussing the potential functions of show dance beyond the role of spectacle and entertainment, and the influence of new fields of scientific study on the musical, especially the rise of Freudian psychoanalysis and its ongoing impact on the work of composers and choreographers alike.
The first of these historically significant events was heralded by song and dance man George M. Cohan (1878-1942) who worked as a playwright, composer, librettist, director and producer on a series of musicals from the early 1900s until well into the 1940s. Not only did he create wholesome, humorous and patriotic musicals, Cohan broke the mould for how a male dancer should look and move: “before Cohan, leading men in musicals did little if any dancing. His dances were masculine, straightforward, and exciting” (Kenrick, 2008, p. 119). Although not everyone enjoyed his work, his archetype of the all American boy-next-door would appear in numerous musical comedies and Hollywood films for generations to come (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 680).

Black performers and duo Bert Williams (1874-1922) and George Walker (c 1872-1911) are historically significant for being two of the earliest black performers to make the leap from vaudeville to the musical stage. Their work on the musical *In Dahomey* (1903) is notable not only for being the first African American led musical comedy to be presented in a Broadway theatre, but also for the part it played in the cakewalk becoming an international dance fad (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 677). Other notable musicals in this genre include *The Darktown Follies* (1911), from which Florenz Ziegfeld purchased a circle dance sequence to use in his one of his own productions (Harris, 2016, p. 88), and *Shuffle Along* (1921) which featured the dancing prowess of Florence Mills and Josephine Baker (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 684). The success and popularity of these shows also paved the way for Florenz Ziegfeld’s *Show Boat* (1927), a serious book musical which is considered by many scholars to be the first musical to integrate book and number. Not only did it boast a character driven score, *Show Boat* explored serious and topical issues – racism, interracial romance, heartbreak, and alcoholism – all of which were taboo for a musical at this time. It also boasted a wide variety of dance styles, with dance-director Sammy Lee (1890-1968) breaking away from his previous work creating frenetic precision dance routines, and instead incorporating over fifty years of show dance

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25 While the success of *Shuffle Along* propelled black musicals back into the wider public consciousness, it also relied on racist stereotypes drawn from minstrelsy traditions including the use of blackface on black performers and characters which relied on Jim Crow and Zip Coon archetypes. There is also contention amongst historians about whether its minimal plot classifies it as a book musical or a revue (Miller S., 2007, pp. 19-20) (Kenrick, 2008, pp. 189-190), an issue that crops up regularly regarding the classification of musicals during this time period.
heritage into the sprawling, show-business centred plot (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, pp. 686-687).

The emergence of show dance as a narrative tool is linked to the development of the integrated book musical, but it can also be connected to other cultural and scientific developments that were occurring. In the early 1900s Sigmund Freud delivered a series of lectures in the United States, and by the 1920s his theories regarding the subconscious and the significance of dreams were mainstream enough that they began to have an effect on the musical genre (Gardner, 2016). One of the earliest productions to do so was Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart’s *Peggy-Ann* (1926) which delved into the protagonist’s psyche through her dreams. This production is also notable because of the involvement of dance-director Seymour Felix (1892-1961) who was one of the first to publicly voice his concerns about the cultural perception of show dance and its function within the musical. While working on Peggy-Ann in 1926, Felix suggested that while dance was often used to deliberately disrupt the narrative flow and to incite applause, he felt that it had the potential to be utilised in musicals to aid in plot development or add to the spirit or theme of the show (Kislan, 1987, p. 57). Felix’s later work on *Whoopee* (1928), and *Simple Simon* (1930) also indicates a continuing desire to explore the motivation behind the use of dance, successfully integrating book numbers into the narrative more than a decade before some of the pre-eminent choreographers of the era. After all, *Peggy-Ann* premiered the year before *Show Boat*, and almost a decade before George Balanchine’s landmark work in *On Your Toes* (Kislan, 1987, p. 58). Felix’s comments indicate that even in its earliest days, practitioners were interested in the potential artistic and theatrical capabilities of show dance, and how dance might be integrated to create a more cohesive narrative arc. It also suggests an awareness from practitioners during this time of the power of disjunction through dance, particularly in creating entertaining or comedic effects for an audience.

Another choreographer who was instrumental to the eventual development of the integrated musical is Albertina Rasch (1891-1967). Not only was she the only female dance-director who worked on Ziegfeld’s *Follies*, Rasch was also one of few successful female dance-directors of this entire era. She frequently crossed between high and low artforms, performing as a classical soloist in operas, and working just as readily in the fields of vaudeville and musical
comedies. Rasch also studied modern dance in Europe under Mary Wigman, opened her own dancing school in New York, and choreographed a series of musicals for stage and screen (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, pp. 687-688). Her choreography was strongly influenced by her classical ballet training, but also had strong elements of modern dance and American jazz – an early indication of the hybridised nature of show dance as a genre (Gardner, 2016). Her work on Broadway was particularly important to the development of the dream ballet, preceding both Balanchine and de Mille with her work on The Bandwagon (1931) and The Cat And The Fiddle (1931), both of which featured dream ballets26. Her final Broadway show was Lady In The Dark (1941), a musical which differentiated between the ‘real’ world of the book and a series of four extended dream sequences by utilising song and dance only during the unrealistic fantasy realm of the protagonists dreams (Miller, 2007, p. 47).

This time period saw the emergence of some of the first distinctive forms of show dance, paving the way for choreographic formulas that are still utilised today. Numerous concert dance companies were founded off the back of early dance-directors and performers, and these companies would go on to train performers for a variety of jobs in stage and screen (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, p. 62). Many of the hallmarks of early show dance discussed above would ultimately become so ingrained within the conventions of musical theatre that most of them are still observable today and are understood by audiences as an intrinsic part of the musical theatre experience. Some of the stylistic elements of show dance that developed during this era are still used as a symbol of glamour, beauty, and grace, and can still be found in contemporary musical comedies, and period pieces, as well as revivals and revisals. More specific and complex conventions including the use of camp, the creation of pleasure and entertainment, the ensemble effect, and the relationship between show dance and disruption (both the use of dance as a disruptive force designed to interrupt the narrative, and the disruption of audience expectations by subverting traditional show dance conventions) are also now beginning to be contextualised by scholars.

26 ‘The Beggar’s Waltz’ in The Bandwagon (1931) involves a beggar dreaming of what it might be like to be in love with a Viennese ballerina, while ‘Dance in Fantasy’ from The Cat And The Fiddle (1931) sees the central character Victor dreaming about his future.
The stock market crash of 1929 had a devastating effect on the global economy, as well as on the entertainment industry. Despite the dire state of the economy, musicals prevailed both on stage and screen, and the ongoing popularity of movie musicals would shape the future of the genre both on screen and off. Although I am not looking specifically at the history of dance in screen musicals in my thesis, I still feel it is vital to acknowledge their importance to the development and preservation of stage musicals and show dance during this decade. I would also be remiss if I did not at least mention that the first of dozens of animated movie musicals from Walt Disney (1901-1966) premiered in this decade. Although *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was not necessarily revolutionary in its use of dance, the influence of the Walt Disney Company on the musical genre is one that I will be discussing later in this chapter. This decade also saw the growing influence of modern dance, as well as a rise in political musical theatre works inspired by the theatre work of Bertolt Brecht. In the decades to come, modern dance and ballet would soon eclipse tap dance as the leading movement idioms of show dance, and the rise of the self-consciously political musical would lead to the evolution of new sub-genres of musical in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Most musical theatre entertainments in the 1930s are defined by their romance, glamour, and wit. With his tongue in cheek lyrics and hummable melodies, Cole Porter (1891-1964) was one of the most accomplished American composers, penning musical theatre standards that were designed to be danced to. While most British musicals from this time period have faded into obscurity, the work of Noël Coward (1899-1973), actor-songwriter Ivor Novello (1893-1951), and Vivian Ellis (1903-1996) are still remembered. One of Britain’s few large-scale successes during this era was *Me and My Girl* (1937) with ‘Leaning on the Lamppost’ going on to become a cockney standard, and ‘The Lambeth Walk’ serving as a vital element of the dancing and choreography (Snelson, 2012, p. 130). Stage and screen musicals developed in tandem during this decade, with many stage musicals going on to receive film adaptations. Because dance notation generally was not used at this time, and stage musicals were rarely filmed, movie musicals are some of the only surviving sources which give us insight into choreographic trends of this era.
Although audiences appreciated the glamour and escapism of screen and stage musicals during this era, they were also beginning to tire of formulaic song and dance numbers which served little narrative purpose. Stage musicals had already begun to move away from revue style formats in favour of book musicals, and the form lent itself greatly to movie musicals as well. To smooth over the disparity between increasingly realistic plots and characters with the unrealistic presence of spectacular song and dance numbers, the backstage musical saw a great deal of popularity during this time. The characters in these musicals were often professional actors, singers or dancers, giving them legitimate reasons to break out into supposedly impromptu dance routines or diegetic songs. While the backstage musical as a concept was not exactly new (singers and dancers had been playing characters in show business for years) the sheer number of backstage musicals in this era shows a shift towards some semblance of realism; however flimsy the surrounding conceit might be.

While dance in earlier forms of music theatre had aimed to purposefully disrupt the plot to create entertainment, backstage musicals show a desire to solve the unrealistic ‘problem’ of characters breaking out into song and dance. In this way, they offer a bridge between what we might consider the earliest functions of show dance, as a form of spectacle and entertainment, to a convention that works to support or shape the narrative as in the integrated tradition. While most historians cite ‘Laurey Makes Up Her Mind’ in 1943 or ‘Slaughter on Tenth Avenue’ in 1936 as the earliest examples of integrated dance within the musical, ‘Night and Day’ from Gay Divorce (1932) and the subsequent film adaptation The Gay Divorcee (1934) precede both by some years (Mueller, 1984). Fred Astaire’s choreography has been analysed at great length, predominantly by Mueller, in part because so much of the work that he did on stage was preserved through screen adaptations. As a result, I will not be going into detail about Astaire here, other than to highlight the importance of his creative work in the history of musical theatre dance, and specifically his use of dance to advance character and plot.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} As discussed earlier, this is a desire which was echoed by choreographers both before and after him, and can be observed most pertinently in analysis of his romantic duets, including Mueller’s discussion of ‘Night and Day’ and ‘Dancing in the Dark’ (Mueller, 1984).
As the decade went on, show dance seemed inextricably torn between past and future trends, perhaps best exemplified by the very different work being done by two choreographers working on Broadway during this time – Robert Alton and George Balanchine. Alton (1906-1957) generally worked in the stylistic realm of ballet and tap choreographed a string of well-known hits on Broadway in the mid to late 1930s including Anything Goes (1934), Dubarry Was A Lady (1939), Panama Hattie (1940), and Pal Joey (1940) and would go on to great success in Hollywood. His modus operandi was to create choreography which was “bright, sexy, and happy […] unencumbered by serious purpose or symbolic meaning” (Kislan, 1987, p. 64). By today’s standards his choreography is far from revolutionary, but Alton also strongly believed that regardless of its aesthetic or artistic value, show dance did not receive nearly enough coverage from critics – particularly when it took up so much performance and rehearsal time (Kislan, 1987, p. 67). While show dance was not quite considered an art form yet, there was a continuing desire from practitioners to make critics more appreciative of the assets that dance brought to musicals, and part of this included a change not only in show dance conventions, but also in the terminology used to describe practitioners.

In 1936, when George Balanchine (1904-1983) requested that his program credit for On Your Toes be written as ‘Choreographed by…’ instead of ‘Dances by…’ it is safe to say that he made history (Kislan, 1987, p. 71). By doing so, he differentiated his choreographic practice from the dance-directors of the day, aligning himself with ballet and modern dance practitioners, and altering broader cultural perspective on musical theatre dance and the practitioners who were creating it. Originally trained in classical ballet in Russia, Balanchine’s body of work includes a vast array of ballets and musical works not only in New York but also Europe (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 690). His musical theatre choreography utilises elements of ballet, modern jazz, and tap, and he is also known for working with performers of colour including Herbie Harper for On Your Toes and Katherine Dunham for Cabin in the Sky (1940). Although he would work on numerous ballets, musical comedies, and operettas, it is the ‘Slaughter on Tenth Avenue’ sequence from On Your Toes (1936) that remains Balanchine’s best-known work for the musical stage (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 692). This number is particularly notable for the way it incorporated dance as an
important diegetic element of the plot, in a way that had rarely been seen on the musical stage. The number saw the character of Junior increasingly extending a performance, attempting to buy time before the police arrive and arrest the men who have been assigned to murder him.

Balanchine’s choreography for *On Your Toes* also incorporated a variety of dance styles including ballet, jazz, and tap. Hybridised dance styles had long been the norm in show dance (as evidenced by the work of Albertina Rasch), but Balanchine arguably expanded the possibilities of ballet in the musical theatre world at just the right time. Pre-established conventions were difficult to move away from without driving away audiences as evidenced by the reactions of audiences and critics to Balanchine’s work in *On Your Toes* (Kislan, 1987, pp. 72-73). I would also suggest that traditional show dance styles are largely unsuitable for explicating more serious narratives and themes: precision dance is showy and theatrical, tap too percussive, and ballroom was limited not only in its steps but also in the fact that it relied on partner work. The answer to many of these issues would come in the form of practitioners trained in both classical ballet and modern dance, and the emergence of new hybridised forms that would go on to shape the future of show dance.

At this time classical ballet already had a long history of using mime and body language to advance plot and show character, and scholars and critics have traditionally treated ballet far more seriously than commercial forms like show dance. Modern dance by comparison was relatively new, having developed out of a desire to reject the strictures of traditional dance forms by stripping away the corsets and toe shoes, and instead focusing on freer, more organic forms of movement. Arguably, the intersection between modern dance and the musical also reveals links not only in terms of dance, but also the advent of musical staging which began to occur around the same time – a phenomenon where singers and actors were directed in a more choreographed way, rather than merely allowing performers to decide how they would move and stand onstage (Salzman & Dési, 2008, p. 98).

By the 1930s, modern dance had been developing as a form of concert dance for close to fifty years, and many choreographers who had worked in

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28 See Chapter Two.
musical theatre were either practitioners of or had trained in modern dance. Loie Fuller was the first to eschew the strictures of classical ballet for “aesthetic” or “barefoot” dance in the late nineteenth century, followed in turn by Isadora Duncan with her focus on the natural world, and Ruth St. Denis and her penchant for Orientalism (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, pp. 1-32). In the decades to come, modern dance luminaries like Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, and Doris Humphrey would have a marked impact on the musical form, with their teachings influencing the work of practitioners like Rasch, Balanchine, de Mille and Robbins (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 675). Other choreographers who worked both in the realms of modern dance and the musical also include Hanya Holm, who spent much of the 1930s choreographing and performing political modern dance works before turning her hand to musicals in the 1940s, and Katherine Dunham who was a pioneer of African American modern dance, blending Afro-Cuban styles with a modern dance sensibility (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, pp. 67-70).

The impact of World War I, the rise of Marxism, and the Great Depression also saw the emergence of dance and music theatre as a more self-consciously political form during this time. In the world of modern dance, choreographers like Jane Dudley developed her own take on the modern dance idiom as part of “the radical dance movement of the 1930s” (Geduld, 2015). One of her solo modern dances, *Time Is Money* (1934), is particularly pertinent to my own research in the way it embodied the oppression of a worker on an assembly line through dance. This number evokes imagery and thematic ideas to those that I was exploring in ‘The Plan’, ‘Rehearsals’, and ‘Control’ in 2084, and offers an eerily similar soundscape to the lyrics in ‘Tick Tock’29. Unfortunately, the limitations of this exegesis will not afford me the space to discuss in great depth how the works of modern (and more recently post-modern) dancers have impacted the musical. However, it seems prudent at this juncture to discuss how prevalent modern dance was during this time, and to recognise the ongoing influence this style would have on the show dance form in the decades that followed.

Another important practitioner and theoretician working in the realm of music theatre during this era was Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). His rejection of realism in the theatre drew not only on Marxist theories but also critiques of

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29 A modern reconstruction of the original choreography for *Time Is Money* can be found online (Dudley & Goldman, 2011).
“representational realism”, an important aspect of modernist thinking and one that vastly affected all artforms in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Silberman, Kuhn, & Giles, 2018). The most famous of his music theatre works is *The Three-Penny Opera* (1928). Originally premiering in Berlin before coming to the United States in the early 1930s, *Three-Penny* has been described as “contemporary, socio-political, satirically savage” with a “ground breaking, darkly jazz-influenced score by Kurt Weill” (Miller, 2007, p. 29).

Brecht utilised the emerging musical form as John Gay once had in *The Beggar’s Opera* – as a self-consciously political form designed to highlight the very worst of society. In order to achieve this, Brecht made visible (and by doing so made comment on) the conventions that mainstream musical theatre attempted to keep hidden including the use of a live orchestra, and the shift from book to number:

> Its most striking innovation lay in the strict separation of the music from all the other elements. Even outwardly this was evident from the fact that the small orchestra was installed visibly on the stage. For the singing of the songs the lighting was changed, the orchestra was lit up and the titles of the various numbers were projected on the screen at the back.

(Silberman, Kuhn, & Giles, 2018)

Many of these techniques are utilised in Brecht’s Epic Theatre, embodying the convention of *Verfremdungseffekt* or *V-effect* which is generally translated as “alienation” or “estrangement” effect (McMillin, 2006, p. 25), or more recently as “defamiliarization” (Stevens, 2016, p. 35). Stevens suggests that the of *Verfremdungseffekt* is at odds to the tradition of realistic theatre which tends to work to smooth over contradictions. Instead, *V-effect* works to “reveal the jagged edges and inconsistencies of human interactions and psychology” (Stevens, 2016, p. 35). This allowed *Three-Penny* to embrace the disruptive potential of song and dance as a dramatic rather than as a comedic device, utilising what McMillin calls an “aesthetic of dis-unification” in order to resist hegemonic structures of wealth and power within the capitalist society in which the musical comedy had thrived (McMillin, 2006, p. 29). In this way, Brecht’s work relied on the aesthetic properties of the musical whilst simultaneously proving antithetical both to the happy-go-lucky revues and musical comedies that had dominated the stage for the first decades of the twentieth century, and also the shift towards integration which had already begun in 1926 with Seymour Felix.
Although it took some years for *Threepenny* to find an appreciative audience on the English language stage, the influence of Brecht can also be found not only in the work of future theorists, but also in the political musicals to come. Perhaps the most integral of these from this era was *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937), a musical comedy that was also a hilariously scathing indictment on corporate greed, and described by composer Marc Blitzstein as a labour opera: “somewhere between realism, romance, vaudeville, comic strip, Gilbert and Sullivan, Brecht, and agitprop” (Miller S., 2007, p. 39). Its political themes were so worrisome to the Federal Theatre Project that the opening night was suspiciously cancelled last minute because of a collection of union related technicalities, and it was instead performed in a nearby theatre with members of the cast performing their roles from the audience in order to circumnavigate union laws (Miller, 2007, pp. 40-41). Its episodic structure and political inclinations has led historians to suggest that *Cradle* laid the foundations for many political and concept musicals to come including: “*Cabaret, Hair, Pippin, Chicago, Assassins, and Rent*” (Miller S., 2007, p. 39). Many of these musicals would not begin to emerge until the latter half of the twentieth century. Instead, the following decades would see the emergence of the integrated musical tradition as the primary artistic consideration, with Agnes de Mille serving as perhaps the most important choreographic practitioner of the 1940s.

**1940s – Integration, Dream Ballets and Ethnic Inspiration**

The impact of socio-political events from this era, namely the Great Depression and World War Two, saw musical theatre remain predominantly upbeat, with a strong focus on romantic plots and witty lyrics. In New York and Hollywood, musical comedies and backstage musicals continued to be popular, but in Britain, the impact of the war meant that there was little innovation occurring on the musical stage. In the period between 1935-1960 only 127 original musicals were produced on the West End (Snelson, 2012, p. 127) compared to almost 400 on Broadway (IBDB.com, 2001-2019). In addition, many contemporary British musicals from this era were deemed old-fashioned in their form and content, focussing on local issues and well-established settings and plots rather than the

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30 See Chapter Four.
supposedly more universal stories being penned in America (Snelsen, 2012, p. 138). This artistic stagnation would have only been compounded by the closure of many theatres in the West End during the war, and as a result, many of the major musicals produced in London during this time were either revivals of previous works, or American imports.

The ongoing development of the musical during the 1940s shows an identifiable artistic shift from spectacle-led musical comedies to more cohesive, integrated, dramatic musicals. In previous decades most show tunes could have easily suited a variety of musical comedy storylines and if a musical flopped, composers often re-used the same songs in new projects. Dance steps were also recycled by many choreographers from show to show, a holdover from the days of precision dance. This would all change as generic show tunes, melodrama and contrived plotlines gave way to the exploration of more realistic characters, narratives, and themes31, with the dream ballet serving as one of the most integral developments in show dance during this decade. Albertina Rasch and George Balanchine had already familiarised musical audiences with the associated elements of the dream ballet: “ballet steps and ensembles, dream sequences, and the use of movement to tell stories and define characters” (Gardner, 2016). Between 1940 and 1943 however, there were three major musicals that incorporated dream ballets as an integral element of the narrative structure, utilising dance to explore uncomfortable themes and darker aspects of the human condition while simultaneously providing entertainment and pleasure to their audiences. They were: *Pal Joey* (1940), *Lady in the Dark* (1941), and *Oklahoma!* (1943).

In *Pal Joey*, Gene Kelly played the anti-hero title character, a shady nightclub dancer who has an affair with an older woman in the hopes that she will fund his dream of owning his own nightclub. The subject matter was surprisingly dark and gritty for a musical during this time, and Robert Alton choreographed accordingly. His casting of a “character chorus line” for the nightclub scenes indicating not only the social status of the characters, but also the seediness of the setting, but it is also the fantasy dance sequence that closes the first act.

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31 This shift mirrors wider trends in the performing arts during this time, particularly due to the impact of Brecht whom I have already discussed, and the emergence of the Theatre of the Absurd in the 1950s and 60s.
‘Joey Looks Into The Future’, that cements *Pal Joey* as one of several works that established the dream ballet convention (McLamore, 2017, p. 120). In 1941, Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin explored similarly dark themes in their musical play, *Lady In The Dark* – namely depression, infidelity, and psychoanalysis. These themes were explored through the central character of Liza, as well as through a series of four fantastical dream ballets choreographed by Albertina Rasch that embraced the wild and fantastical nature of the subconscious. These included a Ziegfeld-style spectacular ‘Glamour Dream’, the oriental themed ‘A Princess of Pure Delight’, an acrobatic ballet ‘Dance of the Tumblers’, as well as a childhood dream come to life (Gardner, 2016) (Miller, 2007, p. 47).

Of course, no discussion of the dream ballet and the role of dance in shaping the integrated musical tradition would be complete without a consideration of *Oklahoma!* (1943). Its choreographer was Agnes de Mille (1905-1993), a dancer who had struggled in the world of classical ballet and instead turned her talents to creating “short narrative vignettes” (Gardner, 2016). Her work utilised a wide array of stylistic and theoretical influences ranging from classical and modern dance (Duncan, Fokine, Graham, St. Denis), to folk and ethnic styles, and silent film stars from her childhood (Gardner, 2016). In addition, de Mille was fascinated by Freudian analysis, and as a pupil of Louis Horst she would have been familiar with his movement creation techniques. Based around Freudian psychology, Horst’s method involved the choreographer using ‘introspection-expression’ to assist in the creation or ‘discovery’ of movement which would portray realistic emotions (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, pp. 152-153). A composer, pianist, and a teacher of dance composition, Horst’s instruction had a marked impact on many important dance practitioners during this time including modern dance pioneers Martha Graham and Pina Bausch, as well as Agnes de Mille (Rizzuto, 2014).

Although de Mille had been working as a choreographer since the 1920s, it was her work on the ballet *Rodeo* (1942) that made her such an ideal candidate to choreograph Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical adaptation of Lyn Riggs’ play *Green Grow The Lilacs* (1930). *Rodeo* employed many stylistic elements that can be found in the choreography for *Oklahoma!* including the use of square dancing, tap, and modern dance as well as movements based on horse-riding and roping steers. De Mille also fought hard to hire dancer-actors instead of the
usual chorines who all looked and danced the same. Rather than a nameless, faceless ensemble, she wanted her chorus members to be background characters within the world of the show. In addition, she worked closely with the musical arrangers, book writers, and costume designers and fought hard to have her creative vision realised.

The resulting musical was quite unlike anything seen on the musical theatre stage, with its original out of town opening was met with befuddlement from theatregoers (Carter T., 2007). It broke with many pre-established conventions of the musical comedy: it opened with a solo instead of an ensemble song, it had no recognisable stars in lead roles, and no female chorus number until forty minutes into the first act (Kenrick, 2008, p. 246). This was ‘Many A New Day’, one of several dance numbers that worked to establish not only a sense of community, but also the societal expectations of the world within the show. It also capitalised on de Mille’s insistence on casting dancers that could act, with a series of secondary characters coming to the fore during the number including “The Girl Who Falls Down”, a mother hen character, and the sexually adventurous woman who wears a red petticoat (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 157).

Perhaps the most ambitious element of Oklahoma! was the way it explored issues of violence and sexuality through dance. The famous dream ballet ‘Laurey Makes Up Her Mind’ saw de Mille delve deep into the psyche of the heroine in order to explore her attraction to Curly, and her dual feelings of sexual desire and repulsion for Jud Fry. Gardner describes the number as: “bizarre and frightening, filled with scantily clad cans-can dancers, an attempted rape, and the murder of the musical’s hero,” and a “shocking, suspenseful conclusion to the first act that delved into the dark reaches of the heroine’s mind” which stood apart from the overall tone of the show (Gardner, 2016). I would further posit that a psychoanalytic reading of this number could also be made regarding the double casting of the lead characters within this sequence. In the case of Laurey, whose dream we are privy to, the division between her ‘real’ and ‘dancing’ self might be

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32 ‘The Farmer and the Cowman’ is another number which works to create a sense of community, and it has been suggested ‘The Farmer and the Cowman’ might be the dance number that is linked most closely to the plot, a view that is corroborated by analysis that the Act One dream ballet merely reinforces that which has already been made textual/sub-textual within the book (Mueller, 1984) (McMillin, 2006, pp. 50-52).
considered an expression of her conscious and subconscious mind, or even as a representation of the ego and id.

From a historical perspective, *Oklahoma!* is significant for several reasons, not least of all the fact that it considered by many historians to be the first fully integrated musical where all elements including songs, dances, and the book contribute to furthering the narrative. After its premiere The Theatre Guild even promoted de Mille’s choreography as an example of a “unified and aesthetically valuable work” in the tradition of Wagner’s total artwork (Gardner, 2016). We can also see the impact of her choreography on the work of others, with almost half of the musical produced on Broadway in the year following the premiere of *Oklahoma!* containing, if not a dream-ballet sequence, something very akin to one (Kislan, 1987, p. 75). It is also fascinating because of the almost mythical status it is afforded by historians, critics, and practitioners alike, in part due to the fact that it broke with so many expected conventions that early critics voiced concerns that it would never prove to be financially viable. Part of this mythos is the quote; “no legs, no jokes, no chance!” (Carter T. , 2007, pp. 159, 289), attributed to various persons including producer Michael Todd, journalist Walter Winchell, and his secretary Rose Bigman. This ruthless assessment is directly at odds to the longevity and ongoing popularity of *Oklahoma!* serving as a reminder that critics and audience members are not always right.

Despite her key role in the development of some of the most important shows of the integrated era, de Mille would consistently struggle to gain authorship (and royalties) over her own work for much of the rest of her life (Gardner, 2016). She is also not remembered for being the first woman to assume the role of director-choreographer for a musical, nor for breaking new ground on musicals like Rodger’s and Hammerstein’s *Allegro* (1947) which is often cited by historians as being an early example of a concept musical (Kenrick, 2008, p. 251). Part of the dismissal of de Mille’s work may be because her choreography

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33 Integration is perhaps the most historically significant musical theatre movement of the twentieth century due to the major impact it has had from both an artistic and a theoretical perspective. Scholars and critics have made their arguments for earlier musicals like *Show Boat* (1927), *Porgy and Bess* (1935), and *Pal Joey* (1940) to be considered as the first to integrate character and plot driven songs with the libretto, and early instances of integrated dance have already been discussed above. By virtue of its character driven songs and dances, *Oklahoma!* has become inextricably tied to the integrated musical tradition.

34 Though Gardner suggests that her role as director on *Bloomer Girl* was due more to the absence of directorial leadership than a calculated artistic choice by the creative team.
often focussed on the concerns of women. In *One Touch Of Venus* (1943) and *Bloomer Girl* (1944) de Mille’s choreography explored the theme of women and war – specifically the role of women who have been left behind during conflicts. ‘Venus in Ozone Heights’ is a parodic exploration of suburban women during World War Two while *Bloomer Girl*’s ‘Civil War Ballet’ exploring the role of women, widows, and grief during a much earlier conflict (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 152). Although the main character in *Carousel* (1945) Billy Bigelow is a man, de Mille still found space to expand the role of the female characters through dance. This is achieved most notably in the narrative ballet ‘Louise on the Beach’ which explicates the story of Louise’s childhood in a balletic montage for her dead father Billy (Gardner, 2016)\(^{35}\). De Mille’s later works would showcase a sweeping cinematic sensibility that presages the use of dance as a form of transition, a convention which is now standard in most contemporary musicals but can be linked to her final collaboration with Rodgers and Hammerstein on the ill-fated *Allegro* (1947). Her interest in hybridising dance forms also continued, resulting in several creative partnerships including with folk dancer May Gadd and Highland dancer James Jamieson on *Brigadoon* (1947), and with Ghanan dancer Albert Mawere Opoku in *Kwamima* (1961) (Gardner, 2016).

Of course, de Mille was not the only choreographer working on Broadway during this time, and her interest in ethnic and folk dancing forms was echoed by the work being done by practitioners of colour including Katherine Dunham (1912-2006) and Jack Cole (1914-1974). Despite her work on Broadway spanning more than three decades, Dunham’s legacy as a dancer and ethnologist is often sidelined by historians – including Richard Kislan. She founded the first African American ballet company in the United States in 1931 in order to fund her studies, researching ritualistic dance in the Caribbean region as part of her graduate research studies at the University of Chicago, and was a key founder of the anthropological dance movement and lecturer at Southern Illinois University (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, p. 69). As well as being an academic, Dunham had a successful career as a performer, not only starring in but also choreographing for a wide variety of stage and film productions including *Cabin in the Sky* (1940) for which she collaborated with choreographer George Balanchine (Reynolds &

\(^{35}\) This number might also be considered a precursor to the mother-daughter number ‘I Remember’ in *2084*. 
McCormick, 2003, p. 692). Her work fused “fuse Afro-Caribbean cultural ritualistic movement with Western ballet and modern dance for stage and film” (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, p. 69). She was arguably a trail blazer not only because of her unique blend of performance styles, but also because of her political activism which is most notable in *Southland* (1950), a dance work that portrays the true story of a black man who was lynched after being falsely accused of raping a white woman (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 343).

Jack Cole studied ballet and modern dance under the likes of St. Denis, Shawn, Humphrey and Weidman, and worked commercially as a nightclub dancer, but he also studied dances from “Harlem, the Caribbean, and Latin America” combining “modern dance, orientalism, Latin, and jazz dancing” in a style that is described by Kislan as a fusion of modern jazz, ethnic, and ballet (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 696) (Kislan, 1987, p. 86). Sensual, sexy, and often focussing on movements such as grinding hips and isolations, Cole was a prolific researcher who was always educating himself and refused to align himself with popular trends:

> Throughout his career, Cole viewed information, thought, and knowledge as necessary support systems to his life as a dancer and choreographer, not merely as avenues to the period, style, and local-color preparation for each new show.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 86)

His style would go on to shape generations of choreographers, not just on the musical stage, but in the realm of commercial dance and music videos (Kislan, 1987, p. 84). Despite his importance on the style and form of Broadway jazz, Cole’s work received little critical acclaim at the time – an unfortunate circumstance of great work done for mediocre shows and poor timing. *Something For The Boys* (1943) opened the same year as *Oklahoma!* but Cole’s choreographic work for it is hardly considered to be as historically important as de Mille’s. In addition, his most effective dances were considered “pure expositions of the exciting movement he specialised in” rather than as an expressive form that would provide dramatic range (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 697).
1950s-1960s – Director-Choreographers

The 1940s had seen a significant shift in the role of choreography within the musical, “from being picturesque to functional, from decorative to structural, and from perfunctory to technical” (Wright-Phillips, 2001, p. 116). Although dance had previously been utilised to explore uncomfortable themes, the popularity of dream ballets allowed choreographers to explore darker aspects of the human condition in extended dance sequences, while still retaining the all-important elements of entertainment and pleasure that informed the artistic and aesthetic foundations of the musical as a form. Show dance had also seen a major shift in stylistic trends from classical ballet to ever more hybridised forms of dance that incorporated elements of modern, folk, and ethnic dances, and although Agnes de Mille is not necessarily remembered as a director-choreographer in her own right, her work paved the way for those who would follow in her stead during the most golden age of musical theatre yet.

During the 1950s, show tunes frequently topped the pop music charts in the United States, and the popularity of movie musicals allowed greater dissemination of the musical form to a global audience. Throughout this decade Rodgers and Hammerstein continue their trend of integrated musicals with perennial favourite The King and I (1951), Flower Drum Song (1958), and The Sound of Music (1959), and film versions of Oklahoma! (1955), Carousel (1956), and South Pacific (1958) – though only Oklahoma! would retain Agnes de Mille’s landmark choreography. While there are certainly challenging themes within the Rodgers and Hammerstein catalogue from this decade, the aftermath of World War Two had a much more marked effect on British stages. Theatre and musicals both saw a focus on darker and more cynical themes during this time in England, presaging America’s move towards more challenging and political works in the 1960s (Miller, 2007, p. 75). However, theatre practitioners were often limited in what they could present onstage due to legal restrictions imposed by the Lord Chamberlain. This made it very difficult to produce satire of public figures, or discuss taboo subjects like sex (Snelson, 2012, pp. 137, 141). Two of the best-known British musicals from this decade were Salad Days (1954) and The Boy Friend (1953), both of which revelled in the camp sensibilities of nostalgia (Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016, p. 12). But it was not until Lionel Bart’s Oliver! (1960) that the British musical would begin to truly re-establish itself, and
it would be more than a decade before it would be considered a true rival of the American musical once more.

In America, show dance in this decade was defined by its exciting and athletic style. Michael Kidd (1915-2007) was known for his dynamic and masculine choreography for both stage: *Finian’s Rainbow* (1947), *Guys and Dolls* (1950) and *Can-Can* (1953), and screen: *The Band Wagon* (1953), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), and *Hello Dolly* (1969). Like many choreographers working at this time he incorporated stylistic elements taken from numerous forms including modern dance, jazz, and gymnastics while also giving each show its own distinctive flair (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 700). Another choreographer who made their mark on this decade was Hanya Holm (1893-1992) who utilised a similarly exciting set of dance and movement styles, with her work on *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) including “soft shoe, acrobatics, court and folk dancing, jitterbugging, and borrowings from ballet and modern dance, as well as typical musical comedy devices” (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 696). Having already made a name for herself as a modern dance practitioner in the preceding decades, Holm made history by being the first to copyright musical theatre choreography with her Labanotation score of *Kiss Me, Kate*, which was submitted to the Library of Congress in 1950 (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, p. 71). During this decade she would also turn her choreographic talents to Lerner and Loewe’s *My Fair Lady* (1956), where characters used dance as a joyous means of expressing their emotions when words simply were not enough, and the stately processions that defined the movement vocabulary of *Camelot* (1960) (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 696).

Despite the work of practitioners like Kidd and Holm covering some of the most well-known musicals of stage and screen during this era, it was the role of director-choreographers Jerome Robbins (1918-1998), Bob Fosse (1927-1987) and Gower Champion (1919-1980) that ultimately define this era in the annals of history. While their work is considered to have elevated the role of show dance within the musical to new artistic heights, these director-choreographers owed much of their success to their forebears, with Kislan suggesting that earlier practitioners had given them the following:

(1) a standard of serious artistry for show dancing, (2) a commitment to dance as an expressive medium, (3)
considerable expansion of the modes of dance to be used on stage, film, and video, (4) a new and more professionally important use of the dancers themselves, and (5) quality choreography for dancers to dance, for audiences to see and for future choreographers to embrace as a standard for their work and a challenge to future expectations.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 91)

Choreographic practitioners had been expressing an interest in elevating show dance as an art form since the earliest days of the musical genre, but the factors that Kislan lists above were all instrumental elements of the shift from show dance as spectacle in the early decades of the twentieth century, and towards more narrative based, integrated, and artistically inclined dance in the latter half.

Jerome Robbins was no stranger to the musical stage, having collaborated with Broadway director George Abbott (1887-1995) on musicals like *On The Town* (1944) and *Billion Dollar Baby* (1945). Both contained psychological ballets not dissimilar to the work done by Agnes de Mille and Albertina Rasch earlier in the decade, but it was Robbins’s work on the ‘Keystone Ballet’ sequence in *High Button Shoes* (1947) that would showcase what Wolf and Gennaro suggest are the hallmarks of his work: “comic virtuosity and showmanship” (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 154). In 1951, Robbins consulted with Cambodian dance scholar Mara Von Sellheim, in preparation for choreographing Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *The King and I* 36, his blending of traditional Asian dance and American show dance best exemplified in the ‘Small House of Uncle Thomas’ sequence (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 155). Over the next six years he would work in a variety of roles on Broadway including show doctoring, directing, and as a director-choreographer.

Perhaps the most defining moment of Jerome Robbins’ career on the musical stage was his work on *West Side Story* (1957). If the integrated musical began with *Oklahoma* then *West Side Story* arguably cemented its place in the annals of musical theatre history. This was the first time in recorded history that a musical was conceived, directed, and choreographed by the same person, and is considered by scholars and historians alike to be a masterful blending of “drama, dance, music, decor, and performance into a seamless, homogenous

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36 An intriguing choice considering that the musical was set in Siam, though this was far from the only concerning aspect of how this production approached race.
whole” (Kislan, 1987, p. 96), with Robbins’ employment of dance serving “as a narrative tool equal to book, music, and lyric” (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 158). Unlike de Mille, who had relied on close readings of the libretto in order to insert her choreographic ideas into the plot, Robbins’ dances seemed to expand out of the libretto in a way that read as realistic and organic and energetic, incorporating elements of jazz-ballet and emerging Latin dance trends such as the mambo and cha-cha (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 154). The ensuing blend of ethnic, social, concert and show dance, and encompassed the cultural melting pot that was 1950s New York, bringing a combination of gritty realism and sweeping romance to the musical stage that was described by New York Times critic Brooks Atkinson as: “a profoundly moving show that is as ugly as the city jungles and also pathetic, tender and unforgiving” (Atkinson, 1957, p. 14).

While plenty of musicals had dealt with grief and death, the tragic final act of West Side eschewed the traditional convention of finishing with an energetic song and dance routine. Instead, most of the twelve major dance sequences that Robbins co-choreographed with Peter Gennaro were utilised to explicate specific elements of the narrative. These included: ‘Prologue’ and ‘The Rumble’, both of which set up the energetic and violent conflicts between two rival gangs; and the tentative first meeting of star-crossed lovers Tony and Maria in ‘The Dance at the Gym’ (Miller S., 2007, p. 72). Indeed, the choreography for West Side Story was considered such a key part of the storytelling that subsequent revivals have largely reused his choreography in its entirety with little to no changes; a particularly incredible feat when you consider that there were technically no copyright protections for musical theatre choreography in the United States during this time. The final two book musicals which he choreographed would also receive the same respect. While his work on Gypsy (1959) is not considered as revolutionary as West Side Story, Robbins’ recreations of period dance styles from the golden age of vaudeville and burlesque were seen as authentic and entertaining enough that they have been used in all subsequent revivals of Gypsy on Broadway (IBDB.com, 2001-2019). The choreography for Fiddler on the Roof (1964), which is widely considered to be one of his best musical theatre works, remained similarly untouched until a recent Broadway revival in 2015 (Sjostrom, 2019). It is known for its humour and heart, as well as the extraordinary choreography which includes the famous ‘bottle dance’ sequence. After Fiddler,
Robbins would go on to focus on concert dance through his company Ballets: USA, but his contribution to show dance and musical theatre is considered among his greatest achievements.

As the romantic 1950s gave way to the sexual and political revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, music and dance styles began to change rapidly. Jazz dance quickly took the place of ballet as the dominant movement type on the musical stage, in part due to the innovations of Robbins. But it was Bob Fosse who was arguably at the forefront of this style revolution. More perhaps than any other choreographer, Fosse developed one of the most visually distinctive forms of show dance:

Though outwardly akin to combination of modern jazz dance and tap that is capable of assimilating elements of ballet, burlesque, and social dance, the Fosse idiom wears a decidedly urban look built on the foundation of the gyrating body. Pelvic grinds, undulating shoulders, backward leans, hip isolations, and turned-in feet subject to a tremendous economy of movement describe the essence of that idiom. Little room for aerial ethereality here. Everything is earthbound, physical, percussive, and sexy. (Kislan, 1987, pp. 105-106)

The Fosse style is instantly recognisable, dramatic and grounded, subverting techniques from both classical ballet and ballroom and often playing into his own physical quirks. His use of props was another stylistic convention that he is famous for, particularly hats, white gloves, and canes (Kislan, 1987, p. 106). Even today elements of his style can be found permeating modern jazz dancing styles across the world – especially in the competitive dance scene in Australia where you can usually find at least one dancer finger-clicking and hat tilting their way through a rendition of ‘Bye Bye Blackbird’.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Fosse’s work was not his style, but his collaborative creative processes, and his refusal to bow to industry expectations. Although he acknowledged that his dances were not as effective at storytelling as de Mille and Robbins’ work before him, Fosse actively eschewed the extended dream-ballet sequences of the 1940s and 1950s, believing instead that brevity was the better course of action when it came to routines (Kislan, 1987, p. 102). He also explored the dramaturgical and theatrical possibilities of show
dance beyond the integrated dance tradition, using his control as both director and choreographer (and sometimes book writer) to create a cohesiveness that did not have to compromise when it came to his artistic vision. *Redhead* (1959), *Sweet Charity* (1968), *Pippin* (1972), and *Chicago* (1975) were just some of the musicals that he served as director-choreographer on, with some of his most iconic dances including the provocative ‘Big Spender’, and the sinuous ‘All That Jazz’. He also created the first all dance Broadway musical – *Dancin’* (1978) which did away entirely with libretto, instead using pre-existing music which he set his choreography to, and his work on the film version of Ebb and Kander’s *Cabaret* (1972) would shape all subsequent stage revivals (Miller S. , 2007, p. 104).

If Fosse created a new movement idiom for show dance, then Gower Champion did his best in his role as director-choreographer to sustain and preserve traditional show dance styles, while simultaneously championing the conventions of the integrated musical tradition. Champion’s primary stylistic vehicle was ballroom dance, and he was known for using sets and props as integral parts of his choreography (Harris, 2016, p. 93). One of the most historically significant productions he worked on was *Bye, Bye Birdie* (1960), which had its entire staging preserved in Labanotation, and the choreography had a distinctly quirky, modern vibe to it. In a world post *West Side Story*, Kislan suggests that Champion’s work was often criticised for its use of spectacular showstoppers in lieu of serious narrative dance (like Robbins) or new and exciting movement idioms (like Fosse). Despite this, Champion truly believed that dance and musical staging were an integral part of the musical, and not merely used as ornamentation. By all accounts he took great joy in bringing pleasure to his audiences through the art of dance, offering a lighter contrast from the serious narrative dance of Robbins’ and the dramatic, primal undulations of Fosse (Kislan, 1987, p. 113). After his death, Frank Rich wrote the following on his contribution to the musical genre:

> He was no innovator, like Jerome Robbins or Michael Bennett. He never created his own distinctive choreographic style, like Bob Fosse. He didn’t try to tackle daring subjects like Hal Prince. And yet Mr Champion’s body of work is as much a part of the history of the contemporary musical as that of his talented peers. By
applying an unstoppable imagination, galvanizing enthusiasm and a taskmaster’s professionalism to a series of unpretentious, empty-headed entertainments, he almost single-handedly kept alive the fabled traditions of Broadway’s most glittery and innocent past.

(Rich, 1980)

Show Dance Expands – The Modern Era

The most enduring legacy of the pioneering dance-directors, choreographers, and director-choreographers of the early twentieth century was not the emergence of a specific style. Nor was it the emergence of integrated, character and narrative driven dance, or even the development of new hybridised dance styles. Rather, it was their determination to redefine the parameters which governed the use of dance within the musical, and to shift the cultural perceptions surrounding show dance as an artform. Part of this movement included a shift away from musicals devised by composers, lyricists and librettists and instead towards works devised by director-choreographers. Not only did this allow for greater cohesion in artistic vision, it also aided in moving beyond the days of “mindless aesthetics that enslaved dance to the colossal, opulent, and lavish needs of producer, star, or specialty act” (Kislan, 1987, p. 93) and instead towards a future which would more fully embrace both the narrative and artistic possibilities of show dance. New forms of artistic collaboration would prove a defining feature in musicals during the following decades, as new and exciting sub-genres of the musical began to emerge.

1970s – Rock and Pop Musicals, Concept Musicals & Devisor Choreographers

The 1970s were a time of great experimentation in musicals, particularly with the introduction of rock and roll music to the musical stage. For years musical theatre composers had been resisting the rise of popular music, despite critics clamouring for rock and other contemporary music forms to take to the musical stage, perhaps making the musical relevant for young audiences again. Sadly, one of the earliest American attempts at creating a rock musical37 which

37 Though intriguingly, beaten by the British by almost a decade. See: *Expresso Bongo* (1958).
embraced the rapidly changing socio-political scene was brutally snubbed at the Tony Awards. Arguably, *Hair* (1968) was ahead of its time, and has since been recognised as a pioneering and important musical theatre work (Kenrick, 2008, pp. 315-316). Three years later, the astronomic success of Andrew Lloyd Webber (1948-) and Tim Rice’s (1944-) rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971) and Stephen Schwartz’s *Godspell* (1971) would see the beginning of a massive cultural and artistic shift within the musical genre (Kenrick, 2008, p. 321).

Lloyd Webber was not the only British composer who would find fame during this decade. Richard O’Brien’s *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) may have begun as a fringe show on the West End, but it would soon go on to receive international cult status. The film adaptation *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) coincided with the Broadway premiere and ‘The Time Warp’ soon became a part of popular dance vernacular. In America, *Grease* (1972) and *The Wiz* (1975) also used rock and roll scores, and their eminently danceable songs have spawned generations of revivals and live televised productions (Kenrick, 2008, p. 324). After an initial burst of popularity, audience interest in rock musicals would soon die down, to be rekindled in later decades. Instead, musicals began to move away from integration and towards more experimental styles like the concept musical.

Rather than deferring to traditional narrative arcs, concept musicals often have a stronger focus on elements such as “structure, theme, character and song” (Young, 2008, p. 7), shaping their narratives around themes or metaphor and utilising metadramatic or “mirroring effects” to create what Scott McMillin calls “avant-garde Broadway book shows” (McMillin, 2006, pp. 22-24). The concept musical is often political or taboo in its content, and although some concept musicals had linear narratives, the unifying force of a production usually came in the form of an “overarching metaphor or statement [that] is more important than the actual narrative” and where “the method of storytelling is more important than the story” (Miller S., 2007, p. 101). Though this distinction might seem to suggest that integrated and concept musicals are diametrically opposed in their objectives, I would suggest that this is not necessarily the case. Rather, I propose

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that the concept musical often works to highlight rather than integrate the theatrical conventions that define the musical genre, drawing attention to the use of song, movement, and drama as a means of exploring new and often darker themes and narratives during a time of radical societal change.

Concept musicals then are often quite Brechtian in their nature, a distinction that has at times proved difficult for audiences to engage with. When we consider early concept musicals from the 1940s like Allegro (1947) and Love Life (1948), the context in which they were written and performed in had a huge impact not only on their content, but also how audiences responded to them. These works built on the work of earlier practitioners like Brecht and Blitzstein who I discussed earlier. Allegro utilised a Greek-style chorus to narrate the action (Kenrick, 2008, p. 251), while Lerner and Lowe’s Love Life was a surreal, Brechtian piece choreographed by Michael Kidd that broke the fourth wall in order to comment on the action (Miller S., 2007, p. 57). But the reception of these musicals at the time was lacklustre at best, perhaps partially due to the artistic influence of the integrated musical, a form which aimed to smooth over the disjunction between book and number, dealing with uncomfortable themes in a manner that was still largely pleasurable and entertaining.

The concept musical may have also benefitted from its emergence in a time of great social change, a view that is corroborated by Miller in his discussion of concept musicals from the 1960s. The Fantasticks (1960), he suggests, is remembered for its rejection of the “pseudonaturalism of Rodger’s and Hammerstein’s musicals [and] also the false romanticism and optimism their later musicals propagated”, and particularly for its frank exploration of the mythos of the American Dream (Miller S., 2007, p. 83). Despite its optimistic tone, Man of La Mancha (1965) can also be read as a demonstration of the pitfalls of “mindless optimism”, and also featured what Miller calls “brutal and erotically charged choreography by the legendary Jack Cole” (Miller S., 2007, pp. 99-101). Earlier choreographic practitioners like Alton, Rasch, and de Mille, had already proved back in the early 1940s that challenging, and even taboo themes could be explored through dance on the musical stage, but it is hard to imagine their choreography being described as brutal.

In post-war Britain, works like Oliver! (1960) had already begun exploring issues relating to class and violence through the musical form, and Oh, What A
*Lovely War!* (1963) also utilised camp song and dance to highlight the horrors of World War One. But it is the rise of political activism that swept the United States in the wake of the Vietnam war that historians seem to suggest most influenced the development of the concept musical, particularly in America. *Cabaret* (1966) courted juxtaposition, not only in the parallels between the rise of Nazism in Weimar era Germany and the contemporary political situation in America, but also between the realistic book and traditional musical comedy songs which were juxtaposed against the use of Brechtian conventions that commented on the central themes and onstage action (Miller S. , 2007, p. 104)\(^\text{39}\). *Viet Rock* (1966) which presaged the more commercially successful *Hair* (1968) both in its structure and its anti-war message, and abstract dance and movement styles featured heavily in both (Miller S. , 2007, pp. 105-109). The 1970s of course would see a slew of concept musicals including *Chicago* (1975), a satirical and ultimately cynical take on murder and corruption in 1920s Chicago told through a series of vaudeville style numbers savagely choreography by Bob Fosse (Miller S. , 2007, p. 144), and *Pacific Overtures* (1976) where Patricia Birch’s (1934-) choreography was utilised to highlight the long history of political tension between Japan and the United States (McMillin, 2006, p. 207)\(^\text{40}\).

Perhaps the best-known choreographer of the American concept musical was Michael Bennett (1943-1987). Bennett worked with composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim (1930-) and director/producer Harold ‘Hal’ Prince (1924-2019) on both *Company* (1970) and *Follies* (1971), before going on to work as devisor, director, and choreographer on the landmark *A Chorus Line* (1975). Bennett is remembered not for a particular style of dance but for his inventive staging: “uniting spatial patterns, gestures, lighting, music, personalities, and ideas – the stage equivalent of fluid cinematic montage” (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003, p. 703). His practice followed in the footsteps of integration, doing away

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\(^{39}\) The original stage production was choreographed by Ron Field, but Bob Fosse’s work on the 1972 film adaptation would ultimately shape all subsequent stage revivals (Miller S. , 2007, p. 104).

\(^{40}\) I have already briefly discussed this musical and its dance in my earlier section about minstrelsy and the use of the cakewalk in contemporary musicals, but the 2004 revival ramped up the political implications of its dance even further through the choreography of Amon Miyamoto, specifically through his dramatization of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki onstage through dance (McMillin, 2006, p. 207). Choreographer Andrew Palermo would also dramatize the bombings more than a decade later in *Allegiance* (2015), a text that was integral to my own field research during my candidature.
with aesthetic pieces with no relation to plot and character and instead aiming for cohesion with the narrative:

“Choreography is not about steps, just steps, in terms of shows,” Bennett remarks. “I like to think I make the best dances I can, but I’m also interested in dancing being right for a character. Most importantly, dancing has to continue the story line. And it’s got to have a point of view. It’s got to be about something.”

(Kislan, 1987, p. 125)

Although Bennett collaborated on a great many musicals, it was *A Chorus Line* that brought the image of the Broadway dancer to the forefront of contemporary audience consciousness. One of the most famous dance musicals of all time, Bennett devised the story from the real stories of dancers working on Broadway, weaving these disparate narratives together in a workshop setting before its 1975 premiere on Broadway. Unlike the mega-musicals that would come to dominate the musical in the 1980s, the characters and their dancing are the true stars of *A Chorus Line* and the relatively simple set and lighting design worked to highlight and support the performers without overshadowing them. Despite being the first Broadway show to use a computerised lighting plot, it only used simple spots and coloured gels to subtly highlight the emotional journeys of the characters; the set had no front curtain and consisted of a painted white line on the floor and simple three-sided flats which could be used to present either a blank wall, a mirror, and the art deco design for the finale; finally, *A Chorus Line* also omitted not only overture, but also intermission (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 149).

The simplicity of the visual design and the consistent flow of the interwoven narratives of the characters allowed Bennett’s technically demanding jazz combinations to shine, showcasing the talents and abilities of the cast in memorable song and dance numbers including: the opening production number ‘I Hope I Get It’ which introduces the primary characters and highlights the individualised nature of the auditionees; ‘I Can Do That’, a cheeky, masculine tap solo; and another more introspective solo piece ‘Music and the Mirror’ which is performed upstage to the mirrors. The showstopping finale ‘One’, is presented first in rehearsal and eventually as a full-scale performance. This might be a classic precision dance number, but the effect of showing the cast rehearsing this
number earlier in the show\textsuperscript{41} only to later present it as a polished showstopper where the stage is filled with the entire company dancing and smiling as an autonomous whole creates an effect that is simultaneously spectacular and sobering for the audience:

After an entire show that values each individual person’s story, life, hopes, and desires, the ending reminds the audience that the Broadway chorus dancer’s ultimate role is to blend in, all differences and distinctions erased.

(Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 149)

In another setting, with other material preceding, the slick show-biz step-kick top-hat prancing and smiling might have passed as a luscious plum; here, however, it becomes a devastating comment on the lives of youngsters longing after the glitter and the glamour on Broadway.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 126)

The number is particularly poignant in the wake of Paul’s injury, as well as the response of the auditionees to Zach’s question: ‘what will they do once they can’t dance anymore’? The show closes with the image of the company step kicking in perfect unison as the lights fade. “There are no bows,” suggests Bennett. “I don’t believe in bows, just the fade out. That’s what a dancer’s life is.” (Kenrick, 2008, p. 332).

The final trend that closed out the 1970s was a growing sense of contempt towards European practitioners, particularly Andrew Lloyd Webber who emerged as a creative force that was dialectically opposed to Stephen Sondheim. This phenomenon is perhaps best exemplified by the success of Lloyd Webber’s \textit{Evita} (1978) at the expense of Sondheim’s \textit{Sweeney Todd} (1979). While both premiered on Broadway in the same year, only one of these two shows would see commercial success during its original run:

Both \textit{Sweeney} and \textit{Evita} were expensive productions with stunning stage direction by Harold Prince. Both won seven Tony awards, including Best Musical, in adjoining seasons. The key difference: \textit{Sweeney Todd} made theatrical history but lost money, while \textit{Evita} left history to its own devices and made gobs of money.

\textsuperscript{41} Including the sobering moment where Zach asks Cassie if she truly wants to be a part of the chorus line if it means sacrificing her individualism as a performer.
The difference between the two shows is marked. Sweeney is bloody and darkly macabre, with an operatic through-sung score. There is something of *The Three-Penny Opera* to it, with the ensemble breaking the fourth wall during the finale to demand that the audience examine themselves lest they too become full of hatred and revenge. In many ways it is not dissimilar in tone and content to my own praxis, *2084*, in which the kindest thing to happen to some of the characters is that they die at the end of the play. By contrast, *Evita* is remembered because of its successful marketing, its massive run time, and the pop-infused score that Lloyd Webber employed to improve the marketability of its songs to the wider public.

Despite being two of the most successful musical theatre composers during this period, the contempt that (largely) Americans still hold towards Lloyd Webber is still evident almost forty years on. This was the beginning of what is referred to by some historians as the ‘second British invasion’ of Broadway, where the friction between commercialism and artistry which had already plagued the musical genre for years would return full force. The success of the mega-musical in the 1980s would only add fuel to the fire, igniting debate about the legitimacy of the musical as an art form even as it exploded into the global market.

1980s – Mega-Musicals

Perhaps more than any other decade, the 1980s were an era of unparalleled commercial success for the musical; while simultaneously producing “some of the most mediocre musicals to hit Broadway” (Miller, 2007, p. 156). In a time when the divide between show tunes and popular music was growing ever wider in the United States, homegrown musicals were a combination of hits and misses. During the 1970s there had been a string of musicals and choreographic practitioners who had worked on more traditional shows whose presentation style were largely at odds to the more experimental concept musicals. Much like Robert Alton and Gower Champion before them, choreographers like Peter Gennaro (1919-2000) and Tommy Tune (1939-) helped keep traditional show dance forms alive through their work on shows like *Seesaw* (1973) and *Annie* (1977). Revue style shows like *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1978) and *Sugar*
Babies (1979) hearkened back to earlier musical styles, revivals had also proven popular\(^{42}\), while revisals saw whole teams re-writing, re-orchestrating and re-choreographing early musical comedies to make them more attractive for contemporary audiences\(^{43}\).

In the wake of so much nostalgia, it is hardly surprising that the biggest hit of the 1980 season was Gower Champion’s stage adaption of 42\(^{nd}\) Street (1980). This production reimagined Busby Berkeley’s choreography from the original film, adding new songs and creating new dance arrangements along with co-choreographer Randy Skinner (1952-) that would wow audiences. Sadly, Champion passed away the day of its premiere and before the decade was out, Michael Bennett would join him as well, dying of AIDS just after the first revival of Dreamgirls (1981)\(^{44}\) went up in 1987 (Kenrick, 2008, p. 354). Although there were plenty of other American shows being produced at this time including Sondheim’s Sunday In the Park With George (1984) and Into The Woods (1987), and Jerry Herman’s La Cage Aux Folles (1983), none of them would really shake up the world of show dance in the way that the mega-musical would.

The mega-musical phenomenon is generally derided by historians, including John Kenrick who suggests:

> Instead of making intellectual demands, megamusicals urge audiences to lie back while the show does all the work.
> The plots could be followed by any person with healthy physical senses and the I.Q. of an eight-year old […] and since there are no comic songs, there are few laughs to miss out on – so even language is no barrier.

(Kenrick, 2008, p. 357)

Mega-musicals are also dismissed in part for their alignment with commercialism, most notably through the proliferation of themed merchandise, a clever marketing strategy that saw cast albums and sheet music appearing alongside all manner of branded paraphernalia from mugs and t-shirts to hats and jewellery. Stephen

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\(^{42}\) Some of the many titles that were revived on Broadway the 1970s included: On Your Toes, Show Boat, Gypsy, Chicago, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Cabaret, 1776, The Music Man, Guys and Dolls, Annie Get Your Gun, Kiss Me, Kate, Oklahoma! (Reynolds & McCormick, 2003).

\(^{43}\) As was the case for another production that Gennaro choreographed, Irene (1973)

\(^{44}\) For which he produced cleverly choreographed, cinematic stage transitions.
Banfield suggested in 1994 that “to achieve immortality a musical has to sell things” (Banfield, 1994, p. 222) and selling things was something that the mega-musical did extraordinarily well.

In previous years the rising costs associated with mounting a musical had been blamed on the integrated musical, but the budgets for the average mega-musical would blow them right out of the water. Massive advances in stage technologies allowed for spectacle on a previously unprecedented scale with complicated hydraulics, full theatre set conversions, and hero set pieces like giant chandeliers and full-sized helicopters all becoming hallmarks of the mega-musical. Another defining feature of mega-musicals was that touring productions tended to retain all elements of the original staging and choreography, ensuring that all audiences got to see the exact same show regardless of where it was being performed:

Substance took a backseat to spectacle, lush melody, and soap opera-style sentiment. In megamusicals, star performers were unnecessary – the production was the star, making these shows attractions regardless of who was in the cast.

(Kenrick, 2008, p. 341)

As a result of their popularity, many mega-musicals would go on to tour globally, and while many of these shows were not necessarily considered to be great art, they certainly made the musical more accessible to a wider audience, paving the way for the influx of jukebox, corporate, and Disney musicals in following decades.

Andrew Lloyd Webber dominated the musical stage on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1980s and many of his shows utilised dance in surprising, if not always entirely effective ways. His first hit of the decade was Cats (1980), a musical that is considered by many historians to be one of the worst musicals ever made. It has been suggested that “the most revolutionary thing about Cats was the marketing” (Kenrick, 2008, p. 347) and that its premiere on Broadway heralded an invasion of British mega-musicals. In a way, Kenrick was correct. It did revolutionise the way musicals were marketed, and merchandise stands full of the glowing yellow feline eyes that have become its trademark followed the show through substantial runs on the West End, Broadway, and a bevy of
international tours. Despite its commercial success, *Cats* is still heavily critiqued for its perceived narrative shortcomings\textsuperscript{45}, however I would argue that it remains a remarkable piece of theatre primarily because of Gillian Lynne’s landmark choreography. Indeed, Miller suggests that the key to its success was that it executed a tremendously frivolous premise in a very serious way, with director Trevor Nunn (1940-) and choreographer Gillian Lynne (1926-2018) utilising character work, improv, and movement exercises in order to create the distinctive movement idiom that would come to define the show (Miller S., 2007, pp. 156-157). Their work was also greatly aided by the rapidly expanding dance scene in Britain, where training for musical theatre performers was producing triple threats that were more than able to cope with the technical demands of a show that required dancers to be fluent in jazz, ballet, and gymnastics, with occasional segues into campy vaudeville tap, and rock and roll gyrations (Miller S., 2007, p. 157).

*Cats* was followed by *Song and Dance* (1982), a love story with an experimental structure that featured some interesting creative ideas that did not quite land with audiences. The show was divided into two acts; Song, which plays as a one woman musical; and Dance, an extended ballet choreographed by Anthony Van Laast (1951-). Lloyd Webber’s next work, *Starlight Express* (1984), was even more bizarre, taking its inspiration from British children’s book series Thomas The Tank Engine and incorporating a multi-level roller rink set that completely transformed the interior of the Apollo Victoria Theatre\textsuperscript{46}. To complement the set, choreographer Arlene Phillips (1943-) developed a movement vocabulary which required the actors to sing and dance on roller skates. Another of Lloyd Webber’s shows that is considered by historians as one of the worst musicals of all time, *Starlight* found surprising success in Germany, where a German language production has been running consistently since 1988 in an arena that was custom-built for the show (Cox, 2017) (Longman, 2017).

Although Lloyd Webber’s work is often denigrated for their status as mega-musicals, I maintain that many of his shows might have been considered more

\textsuperscript{45} For examples, merely consult any of the reviews for the 2016 revival in New York or the more recent 2019 movie adaptation.

\textsuperscript{46} The set was designed by John Napier who was responsible for the design of a bevy of mega-musicals including Lloyd Webber’s *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), *Cats* (1981), and *Sunset Boulevard* (1993), as well as Boublil and Shönberg’s *Les Miserablés* (1985) and *Miss Saigon* (1989).
closely aligned to the concept musical if not for a desire to distance his work from Sondheim’s. Because of his reputation for bombastic spectacle, analysis of Lloyd Webber’s musicals often fails to consider their focus on the elements of his shows which are most artistically interesting. This often includes elements of dance and choreography (Cats), creative adaptations (Starlight Express), and experimentation with narrative structure (Song and Dance). On a conceptual and structural level, the idea of basing a musical around a book of poetry or separating the conventions of song and dance entirely are very interesting artistic choices. Sadly, most of Lloyd Webber’s work has historically been dismissed as unworthy of critical or academic attention, either ridiculed or reduced to a historical footnote.

The 1980s closed out with two dance-heavy shows, both vying for the Tony award for best choreography. Tommy Tune’s Grand Hotel (1989) was praised by critics, with Miller suggesting that: “the dance world was also very excited about Grand Hotel, not just in the way that dance permeated the show, but also in the deeply integrated way it shared the duties of storytelling” (Miller, 2007, p. 178). By contrast, Jerome Robbins’ Broadway (1989) built on the legacy of earlier dance musicals like Bob Fosse’s Dancin’ (1978) which was the first to do away entirely with a libretto, and instead focussed on presenting a showcase of their body of work. These shows paved the way not only for the dance heavy mega-musicals of the 1980s, but also the ‘dansicals’ and concert dance shows of the 1990s and 2000s.

1970s-2000s – Dansicals

Although some historians would doubtless insist that during the 1990s “the most exciting new musicals were rarely on Broadway anymore” (Miller, 2007, p. 180), there was still interesting work being done on a variety of fronts during this time period. Although adaptations and revivals have remained staples of the genre, this was also the decade that saw the rise of the dansical and the jukebox musical, as well as the corporate musical, best exemplified by the explosion of Disney properties on Broadway. This was the era that I grew up in, influenced not only by the smorgasbord of historical musicals that had already been, but also a shift towards new forms of expression through dance, both on the musical and concert dance stage, and in a new generation of movie musicals.
The 1980s had already seen a bevy of musicals that experimented with dance, including the work of Gillian Lynne and Arlene Phillips on the Lloyd Webber mega-musicals. Less well known is Graciela Daniele, who had worked under Michael Bennett and Bob Fosse’s tutelage during the 1970s. As was often the case with female choreographers during this time, Daniele worked on a string of revivals and experimental musicals which would ultimately be overshadowed by other choreographers. Her Latin dance themed show *Tango Apasionado* (1987) was an early example of two other ‘dansicals’, *Dangerous Games* (1989) and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1995) (Stiehl, 2008, p. 23). Her career on the musical stage would see her take up the mantle as the first female director-choreographer on Broadway since Agnes de Mille. Her best known music theatre works include *Once On This Island* (1990), the critically acclaimed *Ragtime* (1998) which utilised African American dance forms like the cakewalk to comment on race relations in America, and her direction for *Bernarda Alba* (2006) which utilised the novel convention of having the characters confined to chairs for much of the production (Coleman & Sebesta, 2008, pp. 223-226).

Despite Daniele’s fascinating directorial approach to *Once On This Island* which saw the actors serving as “sets, props, special effects, sound effects, and commentators” (Miller S. , 2007) in a manner that presages Andy Blankenbeuhler’s work on *Hamilton*, all of the Tony nominations that this production earned would instead be awarded to Tommy Tune’s *The Will Rogers Follies* (1991). As a performer, Tune’s style was reminiscent of the eccentric dancers from the days of vaudeville, and his choreography often invoked nostalgia for a bygone era through its application of spectacle. *The Will Rogers Follies* utilised impeccable routines drawn from the days of precision dance, with the memorable use of tambourine hats in ‘Favourite Son’ as well as the use of Broadway style tap. But this decade would also see street tap gaining traction, not only as a form of concert dance in shows like *Stomp!* (1991) and *Tap Dogs* (1995), as well as on the musical stage.

The dramatic and theatrical capacity of tap dance within the musical was perhaps best exemplified by the success of *Jelly’s Last Jam* (1992) and *Bring in

47 These concert dance shows, along with Irish dance spectacles *Riverdance* (1995) and *Lord of the Dance* (1996) were also instrumental components of the landscape of concert dance during my childhood.
Da’ Noise, Bring in Da’ Funk (1996). Tap legends Gregory Hines (1946-2003) and Savion Glover (1973-) co-starred in Jelly’s Last Jam where their hoofing skills and director George Wolfe’s vision saw tap used to great theatrical and dramatic effect, exploring the life of ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton the father of jazz music (Pinkins, 2015). Glover would go on to blend tap and hip-hop in his choreography for Noise/Funk, marrying the concept and dance musical. Both of these shows dealt with issues of race in America through the medium of tap dance, and sought to elevate tap from its role as a form of mindless spectacle and instead use it to explore aspects of character and emotion (Harris, 2016, p. 95), and their critical success illustrated that tap was just as capable of conveying emotion, character, and story as jazz and ballet (Miller, 2007, p. 202).

By the dawn of the new millennium, most of the influential director-choreographers of the twentieth century had passed away except for Tommy Tune. But the 1990s saw the emergence of a slew of largely female director-choreographers. All of the choreographers nominated for Tony awards in the 2000 season were women, the very first time it had happened since the inception of the awards in the 1940s (Graves, 2001, p. 155). The winner was director-choreographer Susan Stroman (1954-), who had already received many accolades, including for her work on Crazy For You (1992), a revisal of Girl Crazy (1930). She would go on to choreograph and direct for a variety of shows during the 1990s, but it was her dance play Contact (2000) that would make history as one of the most contentious Tony wins in musical theatre history, taking out the awards for best choreography and best musical despite having no live singing, no orchestra, and little dialogue (Kenrick, 2008, pp. 370-371). There was some contention from critics: how could a musical be a musical if there was no orchestra and no singing? Stroman had perhaps inadvertently opened a Pandora’s box of fairly serious questions about just what it was that constituted a musical. This would only be exacerbated by other so-called ‘dansicals’ from this era including: Fosse (1999) which paid tribute to the work of the late Bob Fosse in a way not dissimilar to Jerome Robbins’ Broadway had a decade earlier48, as well as Lynne Taylor-Corbett’s Swing! (1999) and Twyla Tharpe’s (1941-) Movin’ Out (2002),

48 Performers Gwen Verdon and Ann Reinking were instrumental to the creation of Fosse, and their part in Fosse’s legacy would pave the way for their own successful choreographic careers, coinciding with a rise in female choreographers and director-choreographers being recognised for their work.
both of which blurred the lines between dance and jukebox musicals (Stiehl, 2008, pp. 23-24).

The choreographers who worked on dansicals and other dance-led musicals during this time utilised show dance in a variety of ways. Verdon and Reinking attempted to preserve the past through showcases of significant choreographers. Others like Daniele, Stroman, Hines and Glover were more experimental, pushing the creative boundaries not only of the musical, but also the function of dance within it. Screen to stage adaptations with dance heavy plots also saw commercial, if not always critical success during this decade.

Regardless of their successes, all of these musical works put dance front and centre in new and exciting ways, creating new sub-genres and highlighting the importance of dance and movement not only as a storytelling device, but also as a visual language that could be tailored to suit any context. Future shows would incorporate an ever broader palate of dance styles including: Bollywood dancing in *Bombay Dreams* (2002), street tap in *Billy Elliot* (2005), as well as hip-hop in shows as diverse as *In The Heights* (2007), *Into the Hoods* (2010), and *Hamilton* (2016).

1990s-2010s – Jukebox Musicals

Most histories of musical theatre suggest that the contemporary jukebox musical began when *Mamma Mia!* (1999) premiered on Broadway back in 2001. However, there are several shows which have been highlighted as precursors to the modern jukebox or compilation musical. If we posit that a jukebox musical is “a narrative piece of theatre woven together with the discography of an artist, band, or era” (Casey, 2018) we can see examples appearing as early as the mid-1970s. For many critics, jukebox musicals are an embodiment of some of the worst elements of the musical theatre genre. Their reliance on pre-established audiences has made them very successful.

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50 Despite premiering on the West End in 1999, and again in Australia in 2001 ahead of its first Broadway outing.
commercially, particularly in Australia where few original musicals are produced in favour of jukebox shows based around popular recording artists\textsuperscript{52}. However, their use of dramatic tropes and stereotypes ensures their plots and characters are generally predictable and therefore easy to consume. This is not to say that there is no merit in deeper critical analysis of the jukebox musical; merely that it might be wise to approach them with a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve. The nostalgia and pleasure of hearing popular music presented in a new way is the primary element that most scholars have delved into\textsuperscript{53}, but for the purposes of my own research I am far more interested in the ways that different jukebox musicals utilise dance.

Because many of these shows are bio musicals and thus, period pieces, the choreography often draws on historical and culturally appropriate dance trends\textsuperscript{54}, as well as sometimes utilising conventions taken from show dance or concert dance. Jukebox musicals with rock scores tend to use dance slightly differently again, with shows like \textit{We Will Rock You} (2002), \textit{Rock of Ages} (2009), and \textit{American Idiot} (2010) drawing on rock star gyrations, moshing, and slam dancing. Because of their connection to wider pop culture, jukebox musicals often utilise choreography which is technically quite simple. Anthony Van Laast’s choreography for \textit{Mamma Mia!} is a perfect example of this:

By foregoing choreographic movement that inspires awe and admiration and replacing it with stage activity that seems easy to emulate, the show encourages its audience to do in public what they have been doing all their lives in private, namely dancing along to ABBA songs: \textit{Mamma Mia!} may have been the very first musical that had its viewers dancing in the aisles.  

(Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016, pp. 205-206)

The claim that \textit{Mamma Mia!} was the first to achieve this feat is unlikely, but it does reveal an exceptionally important detail about the jukebox musical and its relationship to the audience. Specifically, jukebox musicals evoke feelings of

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Shout! The Legend of the Wild One} (2000), \textit{Dusty – The Original Pop Diva} (2006), and \textit{Dream Lover: The Bobby Darin Musical} (2016) all saw successful Australian tours. In addition, some of Australia’s most successful musical exports include \textit{The Boy From Oz} (1998) which is based off the music of Peter Allen, and \textit{Priscilla Queen of the Desert: The Musical} (2006) which is closer in spirit to a compilation or bricolage musical than a traditional jukebox show.

\textsuperscript{53} See (Taylor M., 2012) and (Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016).

\textsuperscript{54} This can be observed in the choreography for shows like \textit{Memphis} (2009), \textit{Motown} (2013), \textit{Beautiful: the Carole King Musical} (2014), and \textit{On Your Feet!} (2015).
community and nostalgia in a way that other musical sub genres cannot necessarily replicate. This occurs not only through the music and songs, but also the dancing that accompanies it.

This same phenomenon can also be observed in a currently emerging cousin to the jukebox musical – the bricolage musical. Recalling the nature of the ballad opera form in a post-modern era, the term was first proposed by Dominic Symonds and Millie Taylor and relates to the construction of a narrative through “a patchwork bricolage of intertextual references” (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 121). Their example is the film Moulin Rouge! which saw Australian director Baz Luhrmann (1962-) mash-up and remix contemporary properties for a story set at the turn of the century55. This same formula was used for Luhrmann’s Strictly Ballroom: The Musical (2014), as well as Global Creatures King Kong (2013)56 and Muriel’s Wedding (2017) – all of which interpolated pre-existing songs with new material written specifically for the show.

While it remains to see whether the bricolage musical will become a viable form going forward, it is interesting that the lines between popular music and musical theatre are once again blurring. Not only are practitioners beginning to straddle the line between original and jukebox musicals, many pop musicians have penned successful musicals in recent years including Elton John, Sting, Cyndi Lauper, Sara Bareilles and Anais Mitchell. The act of remixing and reimagining songs from popular musicals is also becoming more and more popular in the current climate of music and video streaming services like Spotify and YouTube, with fan-made covers and remixes joining properties like Forbidden Broadway and The Hamilton Mixtape.

1990s-2010 - The Corporate Musical, the Disney-fication of Broadway, and New Musical Comedies

The Disney Renaissance (1989-1999) was an era of almost unparalleled creativity for the Walt Disney company (Sanza, 2018). This was a time during which they released a new film every year for a decade, so it should come as no surprise perhaps that it also coincides with the “Disney-fication” (Miller, 2007, p.

55 As of the writing of this thesis, a stage adaptation of the film has recently opened on Broadway.
56 A revisal of which has recently been on Broadway.
of Broadway and the emergence of what John Kenrick calls the corporate musical (Kenrick, 2008, p. 361). These technology-driven shows are designed to be produced and toured globally, usually offering family friendly entertainment with easily identifiable morals. The earliest Disney musicals included *Beauty and the Beast* (1994) which saw an ensemble of inanimate objects singing and dancing in lavish costumes, and Julie Taymor’s *Lion King* (1997) which raised the artistic bar quite considerably with its marriage of puppetry, African dance, and stylised animalistic movements not dissimilar to Gillian Lynne’s work on *Cats*. Since then Disney has produced a variety of musicals based on their own properties including *Aida* (2000), *Mary Poppins* (2004), *The Little Mermaid* (2008), *Newsies* (2012), *Aladdin* (2011), and *Frozen* (2018), and have arguably paved the way for musical adaptations of other children’s properties like *SpongeBob SquarePants: The Musical* (2016).

Of course, not everyone was thrilled with the proliferation of the corporate, Disney musical, as seen by this interview with Stephen Sondheim from 2000:

> You have two kinds of shows on Broadway – revivals and the same kind of musicals over and over again, all spectacles. You get your tickets for *The Lion King* a year in advance, and essentially a family comes as if to a picnic, and they pass on to their children the idea that that’s what the theater is – a spectacular musical you see once a year, a stage version of a movie. It has nothing to do with theater at all. It has to do with seeing what is familiar. We live in a recycled culture […] I don’t think the theatre will die per se, but it’s never going to be what it was. You can’t bring it back. It’s gone. It’s a tourist attraction.

(Sondheim, 2000)

The concept of recycling is hardly a new phenomenon in the musical. From early musical comedies where songs, dance steps, and even whole dance routines were reworked or re-used, to the proliferation of dream ballets in the 1940s, and the many revivals and revisals that are produced annually, reflexivity and specifically, self-reflexivity is an integral element of the musical genre. The corporate musical and its cousin, the new musical comedy, are both experts in this type of nostalgic reflexivity – utilising traditional conventions of musical theatre (including show dance) and presenting them in a shiny new package of family friendly visual spectacle. While these shows are ideal for those seeking
nostalgic or pleasantly diverting musical comedies rather than more serious or challenging fare this does not necessarily mean that we should dismiss them as frivolous entertainments unworthy of deeper scrutiny. These shows, much like the work of Alton, Champion, and Tune, are arguably one of several ways that the heritage of musical theatre dance is being preserved for future generations, whilst also presenting fascinating performance texts that rely on audience expectations to create pleasure and entertainment.

As in the jukebox musical and the corporate or Disney musical, the new musical comedy is another sub-genre of the contemporary musical where show dance functions in a variety of roles: to create mood, historical context, and yes sometimes as an anachronistic spectacle designed to generate audience applause. Modern audience are more than willing to suspend their disbelief when they see grannies, Nazis, medieval knights, Mormon missionaries, Arabian princes, or William Shakespeare hoofing across a Broadway stage because…well, it’s a comedy, and in musical theatre comedies people sing, and (probably) tap dance. It seems that Michael Bennett was right on the money in 1975 when he suggested: “I think step-kick is America’s applause sign […] Choreographer after choreographer uses it, and the audiences always burst into applause. It’s conditioning” (Kislan, 1987, p. 126).

Despite the use of conventions and stylistic elements from early forms of musical theatre, contemporary show dance practices have been irrevocably shaped by the influence of integration – including in the new musical comedy. Although dance numbers still have the capacity to disrupt the plot in much the same that early show dance did, it must also have an overarching purpose. If that purpose happens to be as a spectacular, entertaining showstopper designed to incite applause? Well, that is no less a legitimate function than a narrative heavy dream ballet, or the use of dance as scene transition. In fact, the seemingly shallow veneer of the new musical comedy tends to belie numerous layers of codified meaning. Often drawing on the wider fields of film, theatre, and performance, much of the comedy in new musical comedies occurs through the self-reflexive way these conventions are framed, with audiences invited to participate in a sort of nudge-nudge wink-wink treasure hunt of metatheatrical and intertextual references.
While this can most often be linked to the creation of comedy, pleasure, and entertainment\textsuperscript{57}, the new musical comedy also has the capacity to explore serious themes and issues through the lens of satire, kitsch, and camp – a fascinating area of performance and musical theatre studies that I will be returning to in later chapters as it was integral to my own praxis. In *The Producers* (2001) we see this on a meta-theatrical level in the success of *Springtime for Hitler*, the show-within-a-show that Bialystock and Bloom invest in, and a number that sees director-choreography Susan Stroman pull out every trick from the musical comedy handbook in order to entertain the audience. Miller called *The Producers*, “well made, but conventional” (Miller, 2007, p. 224), and indeed, it does rely heavily on traditional musical theatre conventions in its goal to poke not just at Nazis, but at the entertainment industry at large through the frame of a raucous backstage musical. Other new musical comedies have utilised camp comedy for more political ends, like *Hairspray* (2002) which frames issues of racial segregation and body image in 1960s Baltimore through a bright, pop infused score and energetic period inspired dance numbers. Choreographed by Jerry Mitchell (1960-), the exuberant song and dance numbers in *Hairspray* helped audiences leave with a sense that all was right in the world – regardless of their knowledge that segregation in America had continued to be an issue well after the end of the show (Miller S., 2007, pp. 228-230).

\textit{2000s-2010s – Other Contemporary Trends}

Since the turn of the millennium, adaptations of other properties and revivals continue to be popular, with truly original works few and far between by comparison. In the tradition of the corporate musical, a slew of largely forgettable Christmas themed musicals have joined the Radio City Christmas Spectacular to bolster New York’s tourism during the winter months, drawing on conventions of traditional musical comedy in much the same way that new musical comedies do and creating nostalgia for a bygone era of show business. But show dance has become so much more than mere spectacle, and it continues to be utilised in a variety of increasingly creative ways. Some shows have experimented with dance

styles which have rarely been seen on the Broadway stage, as in Mia Michel’s use of contemporary dance in *Finding Neverland* (2015), while other trends include an ongoing focus on ethnic and folk-dance styles, as well as modern dance, physical theatre, and non-traditional casting. Physical theatre practitioner Bill T. Jones (1952-) not only worked on the original production of *Spring Awakening* (2006) which utilised dance to explore the sexual frustrations of the characters, his more recent show *Fela!* (2009) was the first to bring Nigerian dance to Broadway.

The line between everyday movement and dance is also becoming more fluid; as seen in the work of practitioners like Steven Hoggett (1971-) whose work on *American Idiot* (2010), *Once* (2011) and *The Last Ship* (2014) will be discussed in greater detail in my praxis chapter, along with Andrew Palermo’s (1973-) choreography for *Allegiance* (2015) which combined period appropriate ballroom and swing dance styles, baseball technique, and elements of traditional Japanese dance. Many choreographers now work with multiple dance and movement styles within the same production, as in Peter Darling’s choreography for *Billy Elliot* (2005) and *Matilda* (2011), and Andy Blankbeuhler’s (1970-) for *Bandstand* (2016) which utilised energetic swing dance as a juxtaposition to the horrors faced by World War Two veterans; his salsa and hip-hop infused choreography for Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *In The Heights* (2007); the athletic, cheer inspired numbers from *Bring It On* (2011); and perhaps most notably his critically acclaimed work on *Hamilton* (2016).

The hybridised movement vocabulary for *Hamilton* blends everything from hip-hop and ballroom, to contemporary, modern jazz, and Broadway tap to tell the story of the founding fathers of America with a rap and hip-hop score performed by a predominantly non-white cast. Just as eclectic was Sam Pinkleton’s (1987-) immersive choreography for *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812* (2016) which saw him blend an incredible array of dance styles in a vibrant whirlwind of movement which encompassed the entire auditorium:

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58 Spencer Liff’s (1985-) choreography for the Deaf West Revival of *Spring Awakening* (2015) incorporated American Sign Language, a decision that works to highlight the lack of communication between the characters and made the musical genre much more accessible to audiences who were deaf or hard of hearing.

59 Although several critics tutted that his work was ultimately brought down by a subpar book and score, *Bandstand* still went on to win him a Tony award for his choreography.
There’s a big club scene and people are twerking and throwing down, and then there’s a beautiful ball with dancers in gowns partnering. There’s also a huge party in Act 2 that’s low-to-the-ground and straight-from-the-gut community folk dancing. But the thing that unites everything choreographically in this show is that it comes from a very deep place. Every individual is doing slightly different choreography in their own way. It isn’t about unison and lines, necessarily, it’s about people expressing themselves at the absolute height of emotion.

(Pinkleton, 2017)

Although most dancers currently working in musical theatre have high levels of training in numerous styles (all the better to cope with the demands of shows like Hamilton or The Great Comet) many choreographers (including Hoggett, Jones, and Liff) are now working with non-dancers, utilising elements of improvisation and collaborative choreographic practices to create what some have called truly ‘integrated’ dance. The integrated musical tradition, which sought to integrate dance into the narrative of a book musical still holds a lot of sway, with choreographers aiming for motivated movement which suits the characters and their context, but as show dance becomes more and more tailored to each new musical that is being produced, it also expands the artistic and theatrical capacity of movement within the musical.

**Conclusion**

The musical is a form that has developed through its relationship with a variety of other performative genres. This has included other forms of popular music theatre, as well as concert, social, and commercial entertainment. Dance, which has been an integral convention of both stage and screen musicals since the earliest days of the genre, mirrors this same trend of interdisciplinarity. Most if not all musical theatre choreographers have either worked or were trained in other dance styles at some point of their careers, with concert and commercial styles, vaudeville, classical ballet, modern dance, and social dance all intersecting with musical theatre dance at various times throughout its development. This has led to musical theatre dance becoming what we might consider a hybridised form, or as Kislan suggests, an ‘applied’ rather than a ‘pure’
form of dance: “American show dance is because it borrows; American show dance is because it is vulgar. What else can you expect from an activity committed to audience impact and devoted to audience approval?” (Kislan, 1987, pp. xiv-xv). As a result, musical theatre dance has the capacity to fulfil many roles as an artistic and theatrical convention. As a global, hybridised form, choreographers are able to draw on any number of dance styles depending on the context of a show, drawing on its own history as well as the history of other forms of concert and commercial dance to achieve its goals; whether they be rooted in visual aesthetics and audience pleasure, or more rooted in deeper philosophies of psychology and politics.

Perhaps most interestingly for my own research, the use of show dance as a disruptive force is one that can be traced along the entire history of the musical. Although different models of integrating song and dance into narrative have been utilised in various forms of music theatre, the musical often seems to actively resist integration by virtue of the inherent differences in the way that book and number signify meaning to an audience. In early musicals one of the primary functions of dance was to disrupt the narrative flow to create pleasure, entertainment, visual spectacle and a certain amount of kinaesthetic stimulus for an audience. But this is not the only way that dance can serve a disruptive function within the musical, and my own interest in the use of dance to challenge audience expectations draws on my own understanding of the musical and its dance as both a practitioner and an audience member.

While the actual function or role of musical theatre dance differs greatly not only from era to era and production to production, show dance has historically been considered on a reasonably simplistic binary: either it is a visual spectacle designed to disrupt the plot for the sake of entertainment, or it is a serious, integrated art form which works to support or forward the plot or narrative. This is a view which has been challenged in recent years, with scholars and practitioners highlighting the importance of the ideological and creative shift that occurred in the twentieth century with the advent of integration, while also acknowledging that this shift was neither simplistic nor strictly linear:

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60 We still see this trend utilised now in new musical comedies, although the influence of narrative integration and character motivation means that dance in these shows never strays too far from the plot.
Philosophically speaking, American stage dance enjoys both a linear tradition with an ebb and flow of trends, historical influences, and artistic accomplishments as well as a tradition of vertical integration in which varied and often irreconcilable forms coexist simultaneously – as concert dance, ballet, modern, jazz, and tap prevail as exclusive artistic entities with their own tradition, training, repertory, and audience.

(Kislan, 1987, p. xiii)

Thankfully, the historic dismissal of musical theatre dance as a frivolous ornamentation is largely at odds with scholars and practitioners working directly within the field today. Although show dance has the capacity to create pleasure and entertainment through the application of visual spectacle and comedy, and indeed this may have been its original purpose in early musical comedies, my research has shown that practitioners have been discussing the potential for dance to serve as a dramatic and narrative device in music theatre. Additionally, I would argue that contemporary show dance is primarily motivated by storytelling, with practitioners working to create choreography that “grows from emotional honesty and motivated movement” (Graves, 2001, p. 2).

In Chapter Four I will be going into greater detail about theories of musical theatre including integration, doubled time and the concept of the cohesive musical. I will also be exploring the idea of disruptive dance through the lens of Mille Taylor’s work regarding self-reflexivity, loss and excess, and how they might be used in conjunction with wider performative theories as a tool for exploring show dance in a variety of different musical theatre texts. This will be followed by a discussion of wider theories taken from performance studies, with a strong focus on audience reception and will lead into my critical discussion of 2084 in Chapter Five.

61 This is corroborated by numerous choreographic practitioners, including within Kislan’s Hoofing on Broadway (Kislan, 1987), and Cramer’s Creating Musical Theatre (Cramer, 2013).
CHAPTER FOUR – THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS
This chapter goes into greater detail about the theories and frameworks which informed my research. Within this chapter I look both at theories specific to musical theatre and show dance, as well as those pertaining to performance studies, and to praxis. The field of audience reception provides the overarching framework for these theories, providing a means of bridging theory and praxis.

As evidenced in the previous chapter, dance has been an integral convention of both stage and screen since the earliest development of the genre. It has also been an important element of live performance and other forms of music theatre since western theatrical discourse began. Despite this, as of the writing of this thesis, there are still few theoretical frameworks currently in existence which are designed to engage with the musical, and even less that are catered specifically to the analysis of show dance. Certainly, there is no leading critical theory, no poetics of show dance or the musical that manages to encompass all aspects of this interdisciplinary, hybridised, and highly collaborative art form. Perhaps the closest is Zachary Dorsey, whose framework for analysing show dance in performance is, at the very least, broad. It encompasses: a description of the choreography that considers elements such as character specific movement vocabularies, choreographic motifs, the context of the number, and the relationship between dance and other conventions; a consideration of how dance fits into the overall world of the show; and finally an interpretation of “what a given dance (or section of dance) says, means, or signifies” (Dorsey, 2011, pp. 341-342).

I have already discussed some of my concerns about this model in my literature review, namely the fact that Dorsey’s belief that analysis should not be “cluttered” with information about choreographic intent and the creation of the choreography: “context is meant to aid in the understanding of the dance rather than become the understanding itself” (Dorsey, 2011, p. 342). In addition, he suggests a sparing use of theory in favour of “a faithful description and consideration of the musical’s choreography on its own terms” (Dorsey, 2011, p. 343). This view which has strong echoes of new criticism utterly fails to consider show dance as a style that has been passed down through generations of performers and choreographers in hundreds of shows across the world. Context matters, whether you choose to engage with it or not, and while I understand the desire to create distance between theory and practice, I disagree that analysis
should be restricted in the ways that Dorsey suggests. Kim Vincs agrees, suggesting that: “writing about dance is not as simple as communicating what happened in the dance, what it is about, or how it is made. Writing about dance performs certain functions, classifying and positioning the dance in certain ways” (Vincs, 2007, p. 106). My belief is that explorations of show dance specifically through the lens of theory might have the capacity to better articulate its functions, and to invite more complex readings that may prove crucial in future studies. In addition, within my own research I have found that discussions of choreographic intent often confirmed my own readings of musical theatre choreography, and that reading the analysis of others often yielded new areas of focus that I had not already considered.

In this chapter I will be discussing the major theoretical frames that I have utilised, drawing on musical theatre and dance scholarship as well as theories from the wider fields of literary, performance and film studies. The first section of this chapter will provide context regarding musical theatre specific theories like McMillin’s doubled time, and Taylor’s discussion of loss and excess. The latter sections of the chapter will engage with theories of praxis and performance, with audience reception being used to frame and contextualise the other areas I have focussed on.

**Theories of Musical Theatre and Show Dance**

*Integration and Alienation – Wagner versus Brecht*

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the rise of the integrated musical in the mid-twentieth century coincided with a dramatic shift in the role of show dance. As the functions of show dance shifted from predominantly decorative to a more integrated, narrative-led artform thanks to the influence of choreographic practitioners like Balanchine, Rasch, and de Mille, the rise of new forms of critical thinking also had its impact on the artform. I have already briefly discussed the work of Bertolt Brecht whose theory of *Verfremdungseffekt* or V-effect was one of the defining features of Epic Theatre, but it is also worth considering the influence of earlier music theatre theorists like Richard Wagner.

Wagner’s 1849 theory of *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total artwork elucidated his aim for the unification of movement, drama and music for the sake of greater
narrative cohesion within opera. More specifically, Wagner aimed for a cohesion or blending of the three main conventions of opera as he saw it: dance, tone and poetry (Wagner, 1993, p. 47). The integrated musical has similar aims, namely the creation of dramatic synthesis across all levels of the production, with each aspect attempting to integrate seamlessly with the book. For Mueller this meant that the songs, dances, and narrative should be “artfully blended to produce a combined effect” (Mueller, 1984, p. 28) while Wright-Phillips describes it as a type of show which “flowed from words to song to movement without a discernible break” (Wright-Phillips, 2001, p. 117). The parallels between integration and Gesamtkunstwerk become more marked when we consider the fact that Wagner was still considered integral to many dramatic theorists during the twentieth century, and that the leading aesthetic theory in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s heyday was new criticism, a school of thought which called for “organic wholeness in works of art” (McMillin, 2006, pp. 3-5).

As already discussed in Chapter Two, an interrogation of integration theory from a contemporary perspective indicates that as a theory for the musical it has several difficulties – particularly when we consider the function and role of dance. Much of the work currently being done in the field of musical theatre studies are still responding to and being influenced by integration theory, with the work of Bertolt Brecht providing an aesthetic and theoretical counterpart. While the sentimental, commercialised musical comedies that were most popular during his life were part of the capitalist mass culture that Brecht loathed, his work often incorporated music, reworking the same conventions found in musical comedies for more dramatic and political ends (McMillin, 2006, p. 26) (Miller S., 2007, p. 29). Further, his theory of Verfremdungseffekt, and specifically the use of repetition, quotation, and anachronism to deliberately highlight the theatricality of a dramatic text is a large part of the foundation for the work of Scott McMillin’s theory of the cohesive musical, and Millie Taylor who analyses the musical largely through a consideration of juxtaposition.

Brecht utilised Verfremdungseffekt to try and make his audiences think more critically about the worlds he was creating onstage, encouraging audiences to not get entirely swept up in the story, but to instead remember that they were watching a theatre piece and that they should engage not only emotionally but also intellectually (Miller S., 2007, p. 29). This is in contrast to the musical, which
traditionally uses repetition and juxtaposition to create pleasure and escapism, a convention that is discussed at length by Taylor in *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment* (Taylor M., 2012). Yet, the musical is a form that has historically courted disruption, whether for its capacity to provide entertaining divertissements in the early musical comedy, or in more political works to create dramatic effect. Although the commercial nature of musical theatre may have led some to lament that there is little point in creators trying to educate or incite musical theatre audiences to social change, it certainly hasn’t stopped them from trying to do just that. After all, the contemporary musical is a form that is historically rooted in “illegitimate” forms of drama, in satire and travesty, in burlesque and ballad opera (McMillin, 2006, p. 27). Although the musical is arguably most similar to Brechtian drama in an aesthetic rather than a political way, “Its aesthetic,” McMillin suggests, “Is radical, and that means its political potential is always there, as a matter of the form” (McMillin, 2006, pp. 28, 209).

While family friendly comedies are still being produced, the popularity of the musical as a dramatic and often political form of theatre is an ongoing trend in this contemporary moment. This is a form that utilises disruption and juxtaposition just as readily as cohesion to meet its ends, and the current and emerging theoretical work that is being done also reflects this, as we will see below.

**Contemporary Theories – McMillin & Taylor**

McMillin regards integration as a historically important but ultimately outdated form of analysis, suggesting that if integration means that the songs and dances must advance plot and character, then most numbers are not integrated at all:

> Most songs and dances do not advance plots. Usually the book sets forth the turn of plot and the number elaborates it, in the spirit of repetition and the pleasure of difference. Most songs and dances do not further characterization, they change the mode of characterization – different again.

(McMillin, 2006, p. 8)

He goes on to posit that ‘cohesion’ might be a better term, one that might allow critical consideration of a much broader range of musical theatre texts through a

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62 See (Banfield, 1994, p. 221).
lens which accounts for the varied theatrical and dramatic capacities of the genre and its numerous sub-genres:

Integration means the blending of difference into similarity, as though things are being melted in a pot [...] coherence means things stick together, different things, without losing their difference. This is literally what the word means. Different elements managing to stick together without losing their individual identities.

(McMillin, 2006, p. 209)

McMillin’s concept of the cohesive musical dovetails neatly into his theory of doubled time, where the musical exists on two parallel measures of time. In doubled time, ‘book’ time runs parallel to ‘lyric’ time: the measure of time where non-diegetic songs and dances exist (McMillin, 2006, pp. 6-7). Rather than suggesting that characters “break out” into song and dance, McMillin suggests that they expand into a different mode of characterisation by taking on their song and dance personas, allowing the musical to use different theatrical modes to expand on elements of storytelling and character (McMillin, 2006, p. 56).

There are of course, limitations to doubled time. McMillin suggests that it is the tantalising liminal space that exists between book and number is what gives the musical much of its dramatic energy and power:

When a musical is working well, I feel the crackle of difference, not the smoothness of unity, even when the numbers dovetail with the book. It takes things different from each other to be thought of as integrated in the first place, and I find that the musical depends more on the differences that make the close fit interesting than on the suppression of difference in a seamless whole. Difference can be felt between the book and the numbers, between the songs and dances, between dance and spoken dialogue – and these are the elements that integration is supposed to have unified.

(McMillin, 2006, p. 2)

While his theorisation of the musical and of doubled time offers a much-needed dialogue regarding traditional book musicals, McMillin’s requirement for distance between book and number makes it difficult to discuss musicals that are through-sung, through-composed or through-choreographed. In these cases, the shift
between book and lyric time is less clearly delineated, creating pleasure in cohesion rather than pleasure through difference.

This is where Taylor’s dialectical framework from *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment* becomes useful – particularly for my own research. Although there is no formal name for her theory, Taylor’s work courts the use of juxtaposition, positioning “loss” and “excess” as a broader framing device for six conventions common to the musical genre: “camp, irony, juxtaposition, reflexivity, parody and alienation” (Taylor, 2012, p. 5). Further, she suggests that meaning within the musical is created through the use of visual and aural forms of codification, creating “complex webs” of signs that have the capacity to subvert dominant readings of a text (Taylor, 2012, p. 6). Her reading of the musical as a performance genre delves into its capacity to create a wide variety of theatrical effects, embracing the capacity of the musical to create pleasurable and entertaining texts while simultaneously recognising its legitimacy as an artform that is often far more complex than it appears at first glance. She also recognises that while some audience members enjoy musicals that present sheer entertainment and escapism, others are more likely to seek out texts which are more challenging or political, and that “[musicals] need to be analysed effectively and positively; from the perspective of what they are rather than what they are not” (Taylor, 2012, p. 5).

The potentially disruptive nature of the musical explored by both McMillin and Taylor has been instrumental in the shaping of my own research. The doubling or repetition of lyric and book time present in McMillin’s work provides a framework for cohesion and disruption, while Taylor’s discussions of loss and excess focusses more on the power of difference inherent in the juxtaposition between book and number, as well as visual and aural coding, and once again highlights the artistic possibilities of disruption. Further, my reading of her work suggests that the exploration of loss in the musical often works to highlight the theatricality and unrealistic nature of the musical genre and may include the use of dramatic irony, or the deliberate subversion or reframing of traditional conventions to create a dramatic rather than a comedic effect. Generally, this is attributed to more serious works which utilise song and dance as a means of distancing or alienating an audience. Excess, by comparison, is more often used to create pleasure, through the implementation of camp, parody, and reflexivity.
However, it is also possible to frame these conventions in such a way that excess can become discomforting or alienating instead. This is a phenomenon that is discussed by both McMillin and Taylor, and a hypothesis that formed part of my own creative praxis.

As my creative praxis developed into the creative artefact 2084, the decision was made to explore the use of dance as a dramatic, disruptive, and potentially alienating force. In order to do so, I first had to identify what my audience would expect from the dance within a musical show, and then work out how best to subvert them to create dramatic effect. To better frame my understanding, I engaged not only with the history of show dance, but also with a broad cross section of theoretical frameworks. In the following section of this chapter I will explicate some of the more useful theories I have explored, building on the work of other scholars and practitioners who, in the absence of a poetics of the stage musical, have instead explored this interdisciplinary art form using multi-modal analyses which rely on a wider understanding of the musical as a form of live performance. I will also be taking this opportunity to explicate some of the main terms that I will be utilising in Chapter Five: camp, reflexivity, and disruption. This will ideally assist in bridging the academic and theoretical aspects of my exegesis with my discussion of my creative praxis.

**Theories of Praxis and Performance**

In his article *Historiography of the Popular*, David Savran suggests that an analysis of the musical: “requires an implicit or explicit theorization of multiple (and often conflicting) systems of signification as well as at least passing familiarity with musicology and dance scholarship” (Savran, 2004). Multi-modal analysis is common within the field, and its popularity indicates an acknowledgement from within the field that live musicals are complex texts which draw on multiple layers of visual and aural codification to create meaning for an audience. I would also argue that the use of conventions taken from literature, performance, and film, as well as their interdisciplinary, intertextual and reflexive nature of the musical naturally engenders the form to a multi-modal form of analysis. Zachary Dunbar agrees, describing musical theatre as an interdisciplinary and holistic field: “the singing-acting-dancing-directing-writing-
composing field uniquely foregrounds the complementary or nullifying actions of adjoining disciplines, and therefore may shed new light on the synchronous or asynchronous relationship between theory and practice” (Dunbar, 2014, pp. 72-73).

While there is no singular theory or poetics of show dance, one of the major emerging trends in musical theatre scholarship is to consider its relationship to audiences, and particularly how the musical works to create pleasure and entertainment. In 1968, theatre practitioners Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook both discussed the important role of the audience to live performance (Brook, 1968, p. 11), (Grotowski, 1968, p. 32) and many years later Keir Elam would echo them both when he said; “it is with the spectator […] that theatrical communication begins and ends” (Elam, 1980, p. 59). Each of these scholars were talking about theatre and performance in general, but I highlight them here because musical theatre is a genre which has been shaped greatly by the influence of its audience – and its critics. Elam suggests that, “a privileged and occasionally decisive influence is exerted by the critics, especially in the case of Broadway and West End productions” (Elam, 1980, p. 58). But while critical reviews are arguably an important means of determining the cultural and artistic importance of musicals, theatre critics are by no means infallible. Wicked (2003) is only one example of a contemporary musical which was initially panned by critics but would go on to achieve great success63.

The musical theatre audience then, has a reasonable amount of power regarding the proliferation of certain shows above others. This is also endorsed by scholar Stephen Banfield who suggests that the usual linear model of textual authority within the arts, where audiences are encouraged to engage with texts in a more subdued manner, is reversed in the case of the musical: “lines of authority run from the audience to the creators […] the audience authorises what ‘works’ by applauding, laughing, buying tickets, writing rave reviews, telling their friends” (Banfield, 1994, p. 221). Arguably, this effect is even more marked in the digital age of social media, where online fandom allows fans to engage with the musical on a more global scale. And for those who can afford to see the

63 For further reading see: A ‘Wicked’ Decade: How a Critically Trashed Musical Became a Long-Running Smash (Fallon, 2013) and Wicked: why the musical defied the odds and is still a phenomenon 10 years on (Cavendish, 2016).
latest and greatest offerings of the musical stage, the kinaesthetic excitement of
the music and dance has the capacity to rouse them in ways that most legitimate
theatre does not. Even in other forms of music theatre like opera, audiences are
expected to sit quietly and observe, perhaps laughing or applauding in
appropriate moments but never dancing in their seats or humming along. Not so
for the musical:

No theatre form is as single-mindedly devoted to producing
pleasure, inspiring spectators to tap their feet, sing along,
or otherwise be carried away. This utopian--and mimetic--
dimension of the musical (linked to its relentless reflexivity)
makes it into a kind of hothouse for the manufacture of
theatrical seduction and the ideological positions to which
mass audiences can be seduced.

(Savran, 2004, p. 5)

This strong link between musical theatre and its audiences has led me to consider
the field of audience reception, and to utilise it as a broader framework from which
to engage with other elements of both theory and praxis.

Originally stemming from literary criticism and the idea of reader reception,
the branch of reception theory which deals specifically with theatre and
performance is known as audience reception theory. Audience reception is
described as a “cluster of theories”, combining schools of thought from numerous
fields in order to explore how audiences read and respond to musical texts (Taylor
& Symonds, 2014, p. 46). This area is seeing a great deal of attention within the
field of musical theatre, due in part to its popularity as a form of commercial
theatre, as well as the cultural impact that it has achieved in its long history. But
there are also important considerations that must be made when examining the
musical from within the wider framework of audience reception as elucidated here
by Taylor and Symonds:

Since musical theatre is a commercial form that is
extremely popular, the reach of its ideologies is also large,
but perhaps the way audiences respond to musical theatre
varies from time to time and place to place. How can we
begin to account for how audiences might understand or
read a work – or the performance of a work? How is the
audience affected by singing and dancing? Is that affect the
result of the story being told, or the character doing the
singing and dancing, or simply a physiological response to the song and dance?

(Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 3)

In order to answer these questions, it becomes necessary to challenge the idea that the meaning of a text is stable or fixed, and to invite discussions of not only the dominant but also potentially resistant readings that go against the grain. This is an integral consideration for a genre which has a) historically been dependant on audience engagement (as already discussed above); b) which relies on the use of repetition and reflexivity, as well as inter and intra-textuality to create complex systems of meaning; and c) which has historically utilised the conventions of song and dance to create a variety of theatrical effects which have the capacity to be read or understood in more than one way.

The following section of this chapter will discuss the broader theoretical frames that I have engaged with as part of my academic research and will provide context for my own praxis. This includes a consideration of the role of functions that musical theatre dance fulfills within the narrative structure, as well as a preliminary discussion of semiotics and visual meaning making. This will be followed by a greater consideration of the musical in performance and how audiences respond to dance and will include a consideration of physiological responses to dance, genre expectations, and the utilisation of specific conventions of musical theatre to create meaning. This will lead into a discussion around camp, reflexivity, and disruption in the musical, how they can be used as tools to subvert audience expectations, and some of the expectations of potential issues that might occur when challenging traditional modes of artistic expression within the musical.

Narrative and Structure, the Functions of Show Dance

The study of narrative structure can be linked to the wider field of literary studies, which encompasses the areas of prose, poetry, and drama (Chandler, 1997, p. 1). As prose and drama are both primarily concerned with storytelling, it is hardly surprising that most critical explorations of musical theatre place a great degree of importance on their narrative structure, nor that narrative theory might be an attractive framework within which to analyse certain aspects of this genre.
While it would be attractive to presume that all musicals might respond equally well to this type of analysis, the musical is notorious for rejecting traditional linear narratives. Theorists have also suggested that even the most integrated book-musicals are not technically linear texts either, particularly if we consider McMillin’s with his theory of doubled time. While there is certainly a place for narrative analysis in relation to show dance, a large part of my reason for engaging with audience reception is that it rejects traditional forms of analysis where performances are analysed as written texts instead of as texts in performance (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 45). This arguably privileges more ‘literary’ forms of theatre and has led to a deficit in musical theatre scholarship where the libretto is analysed more deeply than the role of dance.

This is not to say that we cannot glean understanding of a musical text and its dance through a consideration of the narrative or its structure, merely that this type of analysis tends towards plot analysis and how song and dance are used to support it. By focussing on the audience, and specifically on the different ways they might construe meaning, audience reception suggests that there may be multiple ways to ‘read’ musical texts that move beyond a preoccupation with the narrative and plot and instead considers the way they use specific visual and aural codes and conventions to create meaning. This type of analysis might invoke questions like; “when and where characters sing and dance, why they do so, and how singing and dancing contributes to the performance” (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 2). The structural and narrative considerations that follow were integral to shaping my own praxis, especially the structure of 2084 and the specific placement of the dance numbers. While many of the dance numbers coincided with the natural flow of the songs and story that was being crafted by lyricist Sarah Courtis, there was also ongoing consideration of the changes in energy and mood that we were attempting to create. In addition, the developmental period saw a strong focus on how the various elements of the production design, the overarching structure and the dance would support and enhance each other, and how dance would be used to create sub-textual clues that would work to enhance the experience of our audience members. Ultimately, the structure of 2084 came not only from practical guides, but also my own prior understanding of codes and conventions, as well as new knowledge gleaned from
the following theoretical frames that I was exploring as part of my traditional academic research.

In Kislan’s chapter on choreography in *Hoofing on Broadway* he explicates what he feels are the five basic structural necessities of show dance:

- **Form** – the overarching structure of the dance. May constitute a traditional beginning-middle-end or a more abstract theme-variation-restatement structure.
- **Pattern** – the planned combination of steps. Individual steps are linked to create combinations which are then organised into a complete dance arrangement.
- **Dynamics** – the degree of kinaesthetic strength or weakness in the movements. Dynamic variations court contrast, with energy, vigor, or power contrasted with weakness, frailty, or calm.
- **Style** – the manner of expression. Can be particular to a work, period, or personality.
- **Virtuosity** – creates excitement.

(Kislan, 1987, pp. 180-183)

These structural elements can be observed within individual numbers, which then work in conjunction with the other musico-dramatic and design elements of the musical to perform specific function that are designed and framed to create a variety of effects for an audience.

Although musical theatre dance is traditionally associated with pleasure, entertainment, and spectacle, there are numerous functions that dance can perform within a musical. Perhaps the most detailed list can be found in Sunderland and Pickering’s *Choreographing the Stage Musical*, wherein they list sixteen different functions of show dance (Sunderland & Pickering, 1989, p. 11), some of which are similar to those listed by Paul Hustoles in his dissertation, *Musical theatre directing: a generic approach* (Hustoles, 1984), and Nicholas Phillips in his own dissertation *A Critical Theory of the Musical Theatre* (Phillips, 1990). Below I have devised a slightly more concise version, blending

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64 Phillips identifies a variety of elements that have since been discussed in more detail by other scholars. His interrogation of the integrated tradition and the theorisation of the musical as a Brechtian form of theatre that utilises techniques of alienation and disruption just as readily as integration or synthesis is highly reminiscent of McMillin’s work in *The Musical as Drama*. Phillips
Sunderland and Pickering’s suggestions with Rebecca Wright-Phillips’ from her article *Anything Doesn’t Go* (Wright-Phillips, 2001), and I have also considered the functions listed by Stacy Wolf and Liza Gennaro in their chapter on show dance from *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater* (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015).

In my view, the roles of show dance are as follows:

1. As text, to further or enhance the narrative/plot.
2. As subtext, to express an unspoken aspect of the libretto.
3. To express the physical, emotional, or psychological state of a character.
4. To create, express, heighten, or change the mood, atmosphere, or overall emotional state.
5. To generate energy, or to create suspense and tension.
6. As ritual or celebration.
7. To create entertainment.
8. To create spectacle.
9. As metaphor, used to present an idea or feeling in an abstract way.
10. As fantasy.
11. As scene/set transition.
12. To complement or enhance conventions other than plot or character.

Any given dance number might embody one or several of these functions at any given time, and these roles can also shift during the number depending on the needs of the scene. A consideration of the functions or roles of show dance is particularly important then when we consider the placement of these dance numbers within the overarching structure of a musical show. The placement of dance numbers can make or break the pacing of a show, and the success of individual numbers as part of a greater whole can have a great impact on audience responses.

The first two functions I have listed here relate specifically to the use of dance in place of text, or as a form of subtext. The former is a close approximation to the concept of integrated dance, perhaps best exemplified by a number like

also discusses the audience and pleasure well ahead of both McMillin, Taylor, Symonds and others, and discusses the concept of choreographic motifs in a way that is reminiscent of the work done by Mueller in the 1980s.
‘Prologue’ from *West Side Story* (1957) which not only establishes the rules and conventions of the entire show but also illustrates the antagonistic relationship between the opposing gangs which will ultimately form the central conflict of the narrative. The advantage of utilising dance in favour of dialogue and lyrics is of course that “movement forwards *action* more naturally than language”, and that by replacing dialogue with movement set to music dances have the capacity to perform a similar function to songs which condense the spoken word into a musical form (Kislan, 1987, p. 185). You will notice however that my invocation of integration does not merely include numbers that advance the plot. This is because most integrated dance numbers could be said to merely enhance what has already been implied through text and subtext. My use of the term ‘enhance’ allows for further discussion regarding the categorisation of dance numbers that are integrated into the narrative, though they may not necessarily advance the plot. Regarding the use of dance to explicate subtext, this function provides less tangible clues relating to plot and character, and is most often used to express taboo or risqué subjects. This is an aspect which is discussed at length by Wolf and Gennaro, with their primary example being ‘Big Spender’ from *Sweet Charity*. Here, the lyrics suggest that the dance hall girls are selling dances, however the subtext of the choreography intimates their true profession – as prostitutes.

The next three functions have a reasonable amount of crossover, relating as they do to the expression of emotion or mood through dance. The expression of character through dance often involves the expression of their emotional or psychological journey, as well as serving as a means of expressing character specific physical traits. The way a character dances can be indicative of their social and cultural background, a function that hearkens back to earlier forms like minstrelsy and vaudeville, and particularly the use of physical comedy, stock characters, and comic or eccentric dancing. The way that characters engage physically with others, including the way they dance together, is one of many ways that musicals work to demonstrate relationships with other characters. Kislan suggests that one of the strengths in using dance to explore character is that it is able to add “emotional dimension without diverting the flow of the drama” (Kislan, 1987, p. 186). This links neatly to how dance works to create mood or atmosphere within the musical, and particularly how dance ties into the generation of kinaesthetic energy.
While many practical guides for the creation of musical theatre choreography suggest that one of the primary functions of show dance is to create humour or comedy, the reality is that it can be used to express a wide variety of moods or emotions onstage. These emotions can be positively or negatively coded for an audience, depending on how they are framed, and how dance might be employed to create mood is largely down to the requirements of the individual show. Changes in mood that are created through dance are achieved in much the same way that they are achieved in legitimate drama, using facial expressions, gesture, and movement. They are also amplified by the creation of kinaesthetic energy, and by the structural elements discussed by Kislan; the use of recognisable and pleasing forms, patterns, and dynamics, as well the virtuosity of the movements.

As already discussed above, physical actions are readily able to illustrate the shift from one mood to another and often negates the need for explicit textual confirmation:

Mood submits readily to dance expression because the human body registers in muscle tension and movement the visible impact of thought and emotion on a character. Since strong emotions like joy or sadness register quickly in facial expression, posture, or gesture, their re-creation in dance art is likely to transmit clear signals to an audience eager to participate in the theatrical event. Although music reinforces the atmosphere, it is the dancer’s body, alone or in combination with others, that gives visual expression to the impact of the surrounding environment on the character.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 184)

This view is also corroborated by Rebecca Wright-Phillips, who suggests that dance can be used effectively to illustrate both slow and sudden shifts in mood, with the former presenting a more subtle effect and the latter having the capacity to be disruptive or even violent:

The movement often creates an emotion, or can initiate a subtle change in flavor, or may alter the whole ambiance of the show. How this is addressed is vital to the aesthetic of the production. The use of spatial design, energy, and timing all combine to make the dance powerful enough to speak these variations in mood.
Show dance can be used to express positively coded emotions like hope, joy, excitement, romance, freedom, or humour. Conversely it can be used to explore negatively coded emotions like danger, anger, or a sense of the dark, sinister or foreboding. An even more complex reading of show dance might occur when the physical actions of the dancer and the emotion that is being portrayed are at odds with each other, as in ‘One’ from *A Chorus Line* which I discussed in Chapter Three. In addition, while abrupt or sudden shifts of mood have the capacity to create exciting or comedic effects, they are also remarkably effective when employed to explore disjunctive or negatively coded emotions.

In addition to the creation of mood, emotion, and atmosphere, one of the primary functions of show dance that has been a part of the genre since its inception is the use of dance to create a visible, physical and kinaesthetic lift to the energy levels of a show. While McMillin has suggested that the shift between book and number is what “gives the musical its lift, its energy, its elation” (McMillin, 2006, p. 33) within the context of a number it is often the number of bodies onstage and the dynamics of the movements they are performing that creates this effect. The same can be said of musicals that are through-composed or through-choreographed; it is the contrast or juxtaposition between these elements that works to create impact on an audience. One of the best known examples of this phenomenon is the ensemble effect, a convention that sees a slow build to the entire company singing and dancing in unison (McMillin, 2006, p. 80). Changes in mood then are amplified by the creation of kinaesthetic energy, the build-up or suspension of tension as this energy increases, and usually the eventual release of it. By disrupting or reframing this energy there is the possibility to create suspense and/or tension for an audience by extending a dramatic moment through dance.

The final functions of show dance that I have listed above are more specific than general, and generally they are utilised in either an aesthetic, structural, or supporting role to the first five that are listed. The first of these is the role of dance as celebration or ritual, which I have deliberately demarcated from mood/atmosphere/emotion. My separation of these functions aims to make the distinction between secular and religious celebrations clearer, while also acknowledging that celebration and ritual are often intrinsically linked. As a part
of human culture since immemorial, musicals often incorporate dance as a form of celebration and community in the staging of weddings, birthdays, balls and dances, and other socio-cultural gatherings. It is my feeling that the links between celebration and ritual are more pertinent to discussions of dance than the links between celebration and emotion. My reasoning for this is that the term celebration is suggestive in and of itself of a festive atmosphere, thus intrinsically aligning itself with positively coded emotions. By contrast, the invocation of the word ritual has religious connotations and cannot necessarily be tied to a single mood or emotion.

Functions 7 through to 12 are also demarcated from each other, though they can also be paired together by virtue of their similarities, or their complementary relationships to each other. First, there is dance as entertainment and spectacle. These are complementary roles that I have differentiated from each other because although spectacle has the capacity to be entertaining, entertainment does not always require spectacle to achieve its goals and vice versa. It is also for this reason that I would align entertainment more with the field of audience reception, and spectacle with visual aesthetics or semiotics. Show dance as metaphor and fantasy are similarly complementary, with the main difference being that metaphorical or abstract show dance is most often found in contemporary musicals while dance as fantasy includes historical forms like dream sequences and dream ballets.

Dance as a form of metaphor is perhaps the most abstract way that dance is used in musical theatre, yet despite this it is often rooted more in the diegetic reality of the show world. Choreographic practitioners often create abstract movements that serve as a metaphor for something else, drawing on practices from unconventional areas of dance and movement praxis including physical theatre. Fantasy or dream dances tend to be less esoteric, exploring the emotional or psychological state of a character. Both have the capacity to manipulate time through movement, with flashbacks and daydreams providing a means for them to reflect on their past, present, or even future. ‘Laurey Makes Up Her Mind’ from Oklahoma! predicts a possible and horrifying future for the protagonist, whilst Follies conjures the image of ghostly showgirls to remind us of the characters pasts. Another more contemporary example is ‘Satisfied’ from Hamilton where the choreography is used to rewind the action to the previous
song, only to retell the same narrative from the perspective of a different character. The strength of these numbers, whether metaphorical or fantastical, lies in them being successfully framed as such for an audience. It is integral that their inclusion makes sense from both a structural and an aesthetic perspective lest they risk seeming out of place.

The final pairing of functions that I will be discussing is the use of dance as scene transition, and to complement or enhance other conventions within the musical. Once again, I have separated these functions from each other because even though dance as scene transition could be considered a function that enhances the visual flow of a show, it is routinely espoused as an important role in the structure. Comparatively, the use of dance to complement other design elements tend to be either aural, as in the use of percussive noises (made by props, tap shoes, or the physical impact of body parts in the form of claps and clicks) to create accents or syncopations with the music, or visual as is the case when the dancing draws attention to other visual design elements like the set, costume, or lighting.

Historically, scene changes have been hidden out the view of musical theatre audiences, perhaps to preserve a modicum of theatrical realism, or maybe just because clunky scenic technologies made it difficult to ensure smooth transitions. Before the advent of fully mechanised sets, short linking scenes known as in-ones were performed at the front of the stage in order to fill the time between major set changes. These short dances or scene occurred downstage in front of a curtain while a scene change was happening behind, and although they often had little to do with the plot they provided an amusing divertissement while set pieces were being moved (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 158). While there are historical examples of musicals like The Black Crook, which performed scene transitions in direct view of the audience, set changes have usually been built directly into how musicals are structured to ensure no awkward gaps or pauses in between scenes. Nowadays, mechanised set pieces are often combined with choreography, with performers shifting props and scenery to specifically composed music in order to create seamless transitions from scene to scene. This is a visually dynamic form of scene transition that can be found in most contemporary musicals, and negates the need for long, awkward scene changes taking place in a blackout.
The way that dance contributes to the visual aesthetic of a musical for instance has historically been considered one of its defining features. Aside from tap, which is both an aural and visual art form, most other forms of show dance are predominantly visual. The creation of visual spectacle with dance is created in conjunction with design elements like lighting, costume, special effects, and set. There has been much written about the visual effects that dance can create, as well as how other design elements like lighting and costume may be designed to enhance it, especially in the practical guides for creating choreography that I have utilised for my own praxis. Because the use of these conventions is so specific to the overall aesthetic of any given show, I will be discussing them further in my section on semiotics. Instead, I would like to briefly discuss the use of dance to enhance the music and lyrics.

At a panel about musical theatre dance at BroadwayCon in 2017, panellist Andy Blankenbuehler quoted an epithet which has been attributed to George Balanchine, ‘Dance is music made visible’. Richard Kislan also evokes this quote in *Hoofing on Broadway* when he said that dance is the “visual manifestations of the basic rhythmic pulse of the musical accompaniment” (Kislan, 1987, p. 168). He goes on to discuss the relationship between lyrics, music and dance; aligning dance with rhythm and pattern, lyrics with rhythm and rhyme, and music with pattern and rhythm (Kislan, 1987, p. 181). The common linking factors identified here are rhythm and pattern, with Kislan suggesting that dance has the capacity to work either with, on, or against the music and lyrics (Kislan, 1987, p. 189). Berkson expands on this further, suggesting that music and lyrics each work to impart their own message: “lyrics concern the literal and the emotional, while the music evokes feelings, all of which are influenced by tempo, rhythm, accent, and dynamics” (Berkson, 1990, p. 67). While there are no hard and fast rules that dictate how dance should be used in conjunction with the music and lyrics, there are numerous ways that they might be.

The employment of dance which works with or on the music and lyrics usually works to create a sense of harmony and cohesion that can be pleasing for an audience. The use of repetition can create effective links between auditory, textual and visual elements, especially when dance movements or gestures are used to mimic or draw attention to a specific instrument or theme. Repetition must be utilised carefully in this way, with practical guides warning
that too much repetition might lead to predictable or boring choreography. This is an issue that early dance-directors faced, and one that can be combated through moments of dance that deliberately work against the music or the lyrics. If a specific step or type of patterning is to be repeated within a piece, it is suggested that these visual motifs are developed or altered in some way to create interest. This is not dissimilar to the Wagnerian leitmotif, which sees the development of a musical phrase or theme. For dance, a similar affect can be achieved by adjusting the tempo or force behind specific movements, changing the focal point of the performers, or by offering a different interpretation of a previously established auditory, visual, or textual element. This type of development can be used to facilitate a shift in audience understanding, highlighting subtext, explicating a different perspective of a situation or character, or indicating a change in mood or emotion. The use of syncopation and counter syncopation is another effective way of creating dynamic show dance choreography that is rhythmically exciting. Syncopation can be present in music, dance or both. Working against the dominant rhythm pattern can be found in specific dance styles like tap, but also in conjunction with other auditory elements of dance like clapping, finger snaps, stamping, leg slapping, or the use of handheld props including maracas, castanets, or canes. Auditory dance elements can be used to break up the monotony or repetition of a song, highlighting a specific beat, word, or rhythm sequence to great effect. They are also effective for drawing audience attention to specific moves, in much the same way that the lyrics and other verbal utterances can be used to highlight them.

In addition to the roles discussed above, there are also other considerations regarding the use of specific dance forms like the opening number or the showstopper, as well as factoring in the varying effects that can be achieved through the number of performers onstage. In traditional musical comedies the opening number was designed to create interest, usually by introducing the female chorus. Now the opening number as an “opportunity to demonstrate to the audience in physical terms the who, what, when, where, and how of the show to follow” (Kislan, 1987, p. 187). The same can be said for the act two opener, which usually works to re-establish the atmosphere that was set

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65 See: Busby Berkeley.
at the end of the first act (Sunderland & Pickering, 1989, p. 15). The dance numbers that follow are usually tied to the flow of the narrative in some capacity, whether they are diegetic as in the backstage musical, or non-diegetic. Dance is also often integral in keeping the kinaesthetic energy of a musical flowing, providing a much needed lift after slower or less energetic scenes, ballads, complicated patter songs, or long dialogue heavy scenes – all of which are generally considered to be unsuited to complex choreography (Sunderland & Pickering, 1989, p. 15).

This is where a consideration of the number of performers onstage becomes incredibly important, and it is one that has been discussed at some length in Kislan’s chapter on choreography in *Hoofing on Broadway*. While he specifically lists solo dances, duets, male and female ensembles, dream ballets, and the production number (Kislan, 1987, pp. 187-188), I would also suggest that trios have also historically been utilised to great effect, and that the division of the ensemble into smaller groups might be gender segregated or mixed depending on the choreographers needs. In addition, the number of performers in any given routine is not necessarily stable. Changing the number of performers onstage has the capacity to heighten or lessen the kinaesthetic energy as needed, with many production numbers and showstoppers utilising the ensemble effect. Below I will be expanding on Kislan’s explanations of these groupings, and including examples taken from the musical theatre canon.

Solo dances\(^{66}\) generally work to advance a singular idea or explore a specific character but can also serve as a symbolic microcosm for a wider community. They also allow greater physical space onstage for a choreographer to explore the talents of an individual performer. Well known examples include Michael Kidd’s ‘Dance of the Golden Crock’ from *Finian’s Rainbow* (1947) which allows the mute Susan to express her yearning through dance (Kidd, 1981), and Michael Bennett’s ‘Music And The Mirror’ from *A Chorus Line* (1975) which was an introspective solo dance originally performed by Donna McKechnie to a series of mirrors set upstage (Kislan, 1987, p. 124). A more recent example is ‘Mama Who Bore Me’ from *Spring Awakening* (2006) where choreographer Bill T. Jones

\(^{66}\) It is perhaps prudent to mention here that solo dances were also an integral component of modern dance, which is particularly important when we consider the impact that this dance style had on the musical form and its dance throughout the twentieth century.
introduced specific choreographic motifs through Wendla which are then reintroduced and developed throughout the show as an illustration of the sexual confusion and frustration of the other young characters (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 163). The more recent Deaf West production of Spring Awakening (2015) took this concept even further by double casting many of the main roles. In the case of Wendla, an abled actress performed the vocal role and played guitar while a deaf actress physically embodied the character. The use of American Sign Language in the choreography, first introduced in the choreography for ‘Mama Who Bore Me’ not only presented a series of recognisable visual motifs for the audience, it also provided another layer to the themes of miscommunication within the text, and specifically the negative impact that this lack of effective communication had on these characters and their relationships.

Small groupings allow for a greater focus on interpersonal relationships, with dance duets often being utilised to explore romantic love. Perhaps the best-known example of romantic dance duets in the musical can be found in the work of Fred Astaire and his string of onscreen sweethearts, however there are also dance duos within the musical theatre canon that are decidedly platonic. ‘The Stair Dance’ between Shirley Temple (1928-2014) and Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson (1879-1949) in The Little Colonel (1935) and ‘The Worry Song’ where Jerry Mouse and Gene Kelly dance together in Anchors Aweigh (1945) are both wonderful examples of platonic duos. I would also suggest that dance trios are also particularly popular in the musical, with the addition of a third performer creating opportunities for greater versatility in the choreography and the potential for more complex exploration of interpersonal relationships. While ‘Good Morning’ from Singin’ In The Rain (1952) serves as a friendly and comedic routine between a romantic pair and their close friend, Michael Bennett’s choreography for ‘Tick Tock’ in Company (1970) offers a much more dramatic and complicated exploration of the central character of Bobby, by paralleling the woman he has brought back to his apartment (April) to a ghostly image of his ex-girlfriend (Kathy) who dances while he and April have sex (Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, pp. 161-162).

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67 Temple and Robinson’s partnership in this film is also particularly notable for the fact that it was the first time that black and white performers danced together onscreen. Robinson was integral to breaking down stigma towards black performers, as seen by his breaking of the “two-colored” rule in vaudeville by performing solo, and allegedly refusing to wear blackface even though many other black vaudeville stars did (Hill, 2009).
Larger groups can function in numerous ways depending on the segregation or assimilation of different character groups. Communal dance can be used to signify a variety of things including the historical, cultural or geographic context of the characters, or to show elements of ritual and celebration. This can be tailored to the content of any given show and often involves the use of specific dance styles including social, folk, commercial, concert or show dance. It can also include the use of gender segregation, as in the use of exclusively male or female ensembles suggested by Kislan. These can be as diverse in tone as the preening woman in ‘Many A New Day’ from Oklahoma! (1943), the antagonistic gang dynamics between the Sharks and Jets in ‘Prologue’ from West Side Story (1957), or the camp ‘Turn It Off’ from The Book of Mormon (2011). Respectively, these numbers give an insight into the roles of gender, socio-political and cultural groupings, and religion and sexuality. Another combination that is often used, particularly in early musicals of stage and screen, are large groups of male/female partners dancing at the same time. Notable examples include the visually striking black and white costumed number ‘The Continental’ from The Gay Divorcee (1934) and the athletic partner work in Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954). Heteronormative male/female partnering is also found in ‘Dance At The Gym’ from West Side Story (1957) and ‘Dancing Through Life’ from Wicked (2003), while ‘Show Some Respect’ from The Last Ship (2014) sees the men and women face off in a playful dance competition.

As mentioned above, calling attention to the gender of performers by grouping them by gender, partnering them in heterosexual couplings, or pitting the sexes against each other provides a great deal of insight into gender roles and sexuality within the world of the musical. The disruption of these norms invites potential queer readings, as in the case of ‘Dancing Through Life’ where outsider Elphaba disrupts the number partway through, dancing alone and with no music. When Galinda steps forward and joins her, others follow her lead and the male/female partnering begins to dissolve as the dance becomes more communal and less rigid in its heteronormativity. By dancing together, Elphaba and Galinda subtly break down societal norms regarding gender and sexuality.
through dance, serving as a visual representation of the depth of their burgeoning relationship\textsuperscript{68}.

Although gender and sexuality are obviously an important consideration of large groupings, mixed gender ensembles are becoming increasingly common in contemporary musical theatre. *Hamilton* (2016) has an ensemble that sees female performers taking on a variety of roles as soldiers, revolutionaries, and politicians. This reflects the use of large group dance to showcase other societal divides including race, class, as well as the differences in cultural values. In *Hairspray* (2002) the visual separation of the black and white characters on the set of the Corny Collins Show mirrors the real life segregation of 1960s America, and the eventual integration of both groups in the final song and dance number symbolic of the move towards the abolishment of segregation. An example of class issues explored through dance can be found in the violent clashes of the miners and the police force in *Billy Elliot* (2005) which are then contrasted against the high art connotations of classical ballet. There are also numerous examples regarding cultural clashes within the musical canon, perhaps most notably in texts where dance is used as a form of freedom and self-expression. In *Footloose* (1998) the younger characters rebel against the older and more conservative generation specifically through dance, and in *We Will Rock You* (2001) the prim choreography of the Ga Ga Kids is a stark visual contrast to the rock star gyrations of the Bohemians. These non-gendered groupings are particularly important precursors to my own praxis and would go on to specifically influence the creation of the One World Chorus and Rebel Ensemble within 2084.

The final type of grouping I will discuss here is the production number, which generally utilises the entire ensemble and creates the most kinaesthetic excitement. The term is sometimes used synonymously with the term showstopper, a specific type of production number that is linked to early musical comedies, and which often revels in the visual spectacle that show dance can create for an audience. Showstoppers are designed to create excitement and leave the audience on an emotional high, and because of this, they are most often placed either at the beginning or end of an act. Perhaps the most famous and

\textsuperscript{68} Although Elphaba and Galinda are never textually confirmed as being romantically involved with each other, there has been a reasonable amount of academic scrutiny regarding the queer subtext that underlines their relationship. For more see: (Wolf, ‘Defying Gravity’: Queer Conventions in the Musical ‘Wicked.’; 2008).
definitive production number is ‘One’ from Michael Bennett’s *A Chorus Line* (1975), which is rehearsed throughout the show by the characters and performed by the entire company as the climactic final scene. Another example might be ‘It’s Not Where You Start’ from *Seesaw* (1973) where a chorus bedecked in clown costumes, balloons, and toe shoes supported Tommy Tune as he danced up and down a flight of stairs, set against a backdrop of hundreds of balloon, streamers, and confetti. Part of the joy of this number is the double ending, with Tune proclaiming “Wait, come back we need to do a bigger finish!” before ending on a classic kick line finish.

By contrast, the trend in contemporary musicals has been to place the most exciting dance showstoppers towards the end of the first act, as we can see by the abundance of new musical comedies below which utilise the showstopper to bolster audience excitement before they go to intermission:

- Susan Stroman’s *The Producers* (2001) has three major showstoppers: ‘I Wanna Be A Producer’ which evokes images of old Hollywood musicals, with Bloom as the quintessential song and dance man surrounded by beautiful showgirls, and one dumpy girl at the end of the line to create humour a la Busby Berkeley (Kislan, 1987, p. 56); ‘Along Came Bialy’ is an uproarious number featuring a swathe of tap dancing grannies with Zimmer frames; and the musical-within-a-musical ‘Springtime for Hitler’ in Act Two pays very specific homage to the likes of Florenz Ziegfeld and Busby Berkeley.

- ‘Knights of the Round Table’ from *Spamalot!* (2005) expands a reasonably short song from the original Monty Python film and makes it into a zany production number replete with tap dancing knights, scantily clad showgirls holding suspiciously breast-shaped food stuffs, and a distinctly Las Vegas feel, complete with more flashing lights and neon than the Vegas strip. This is an early offering from Casey Nicholaw, who went on to choreograph each of the new musical comedies below.

- A parody of early musical comedies, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (2006) technically doesn’t have an intermission. Regardless, the hilarious ‘Show Off’ occurs roughly where a showstopper would appear in the musical-within-a-musical. The number sees former Broadway star Janet van de Graaf insisting that she’s ready to leave the spotlight behind forever, even
as she performs a series of increasingly ridiculous gymnastics which then evolve into a huge production number.

- *The Book of Mormon* (2011) also has three showstoppers. In Act One there is ‘Turn It Off’ which hilariously lampoons the repressed nature of the Mormon Missionaries, and ‘All-American Prophet’ where Elder’s Price and Cunningham try to convince the Ugandan locals to convert to Mormonism – both numbers becoming increasingly camp as they go on. In Act Two there is also ‘Spooky Mormon Hell Dream’, an extended dream sequence that evokes the same kind of imagery and tone as some of the bigger production numbers animated by creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone in their television program *South Park*. This number irreverently satirizes the traditional dream ballet, cranking the level of camp horror as high as it can possibly go, and incorporating increasingly spectacular staging effects and costuming.

- The feel-good Act One finale in the stage adaption of Disney’s *Aladdin* (2011) is ‘Friend Like Me’. Intriguingly, this number is set in a cave not dissimilar to the one in ‘Spooky Mormon Hell Dream’, though this number is less manic and instead evocative of *42nd Street* with its sequin-bedecked tap dancers and the use of traditional handheld props.

- Although his earlier choreographic work is very strong, I would argue that ‘A Musical’ from *Something Rotten!* (2015) is Casey Nicholaw’s pièce de résistance. A showstopper so thoroughly saturated with visual and aural references to other musicals that it would take even the most seasoned scholar multiple viewings to identify them all. This number is so effective in its combination of spectacle, comedy, entertainment, and artistry, that during its original Broadway run it routinely achieved a standing ovation mid-act.

Although the visual effectiveness of the production number might lead us to consider that the more dancing bodies there are onstage, the more dynamic and energetic the movement will be and the greater the levels of resultant kinaesthetic energy, this is not necessarily the case. It is in fact possible to have a solo dancer expend a great deal of kinaesthetic energy, as in ‘Angry Dance’ in *Billy Elliot* (2005) where the title character throws himself into a tap solo that works

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69 This incredible trend continued into subsequent US tours as well. See: (Cox G., 2015).
to illustrate his deep levels of frustration and upset. Similarly, a large group of
performers can have a very low level of kinaesthetic energy as in ‘Grasslands’ in
*The Lion King* (1997) where the performers imitate the swaying grass of the
savannah, and ‘Itetsuita’ in *Allegiance* (2015) where the characters are close to
motionless as the destruction of a nuclear bomb washes over them. This leads
me into my next section, where I will be discussing the use of visual meaning
making in the musical, and the limitations of existing frameworks designed to
analyse this meaning.

*Semiotics and Visual Meaning Making*

Several contemporary scholars have suggested that one of the greatest
barriers to analysing show dance is the lack of a language or framework that can
adequately describe, dissect or analyse such a kinaesthetic and ephemeral mode
of performance. As a non-verbal, embodied performance form, the wider field
of dance has historically been marginalised or “‘other-ed’ to the privileged
signifying system of language” (Reid, 2007, p. 56). It has also been argued that
because dance tends to lacks a basic and easily understood unit of meaning,
words will never be able to truly make sense of such a heavily visual and
embodied art form, with some suggesting that perhaps it should not be analysed
using language at all (O’Sullivan, 2007, pp. 29, 46). McMillin argued that show
dance “can use words, but it does not have to”, with texts like *West Side Story*
indicating that:

> Words are not basic to musical theatre. They are good to have, words, people talking back and forth, a plot taking shape in book time, but dance creates an immediacy of action that words can impede.

(McMillin, 2006, p. 140)

Yet, it seems that we cannot deny our fascination with using words to aid
in our understanding of even our most physical, embodied forms of art. One of
the ways in which scholars work to interpret the intersection between language
and movement is through the study of semiotics, “a science dedicated to the
study of the production of meaning in society” (Elam, 1980, p. 1). In the realm of

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theatre and performance studies, semiotics involves the analysis of ‘signs’ and how they signify meaning to an audience. Practical guides for the creation of show dance choreography often discuss the importance of visual symbolism and what it signifies and the use of recurring visual signifiers has been said to encourage audience members to recognise the choreography as a “system of symbols” (O’Sullivan, 2007, p. 63). A semiotic approach to show dance choreography would doubtless be multilayered. There is symbolism inherent in using specific movement and dance styles, the static and dynamic shapes created through patterning and travelling, and perhaps in other elements including pace, gesture and body language. Other visual design choices also work to signify meaning in conjunction with movement and choreography including casting, props, costumes, lighting, and set.

Because semiotics works to derive meaning from social, textual and interpretive cultural codes, a certain amount of codification is required in order to understand the text which is being analysed (Chandler, 2007, pp. 147-150). While show dance has developed a certain amount of codification over time, I would argue that audience understanding of show dance comes predominantly from repeated exposure to the functions that it performs within the musical theatre genre, and the ways in which it engages with other conventions. While some might believe that the codification of dance is a misguided attempt to “fix the spontaneity, the ‘naturality’ of movements and feelings within a foreseeable and repeatable system of expression” (Blanariu, 2013, p. 8), show dance is a form which has often relied on repetition. This can be observed not only in the codification of certain steps, patterns, and styles of routine over time, but also within theoretical discussions.

McMillin’s theory of doubled time is an example of analysis that explores the role of repetition and development between book and number, but a more dance specific example is the use of choreographic motifs. Serving as a kind of visual equivalent to the Wagnerian leitmotif or guiding motif, in music and opera a leitmotif is a recurring musical refrain which is repeated and/or developed in order to create deliberate aural links between specific characters and plot points. More recently this term has expanded beyond its original meaning to also

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71 Two of the most cited being symmetry/asymmetry and angles/curves. See: (Kislan, 1987), (Sunderland & Pickering, 1989), (Berkson, 1990).
consider the idea of visual or textual motifs within the realm of film studies and is one of the primary forms of analysis that Mueller uses in his discussion of the choreography in Fred Astaire's filmography. Because the same concept can also be found within the stage musical, it makes a great deal of sense to employ this same type of analysis to the realm of live musical theatre, as well as the movie musical.

One of the primary concerns about utilising semiotics to engage with show dance is that it relies on a certain amount of textual stability (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 46). Touring musicals with faithful replications of the original choreography and video recordings of stage shows might offer an illusion that show dance can be entirely stable in its production of meaning, but the reality is that each performance of any given show will be fractionally different. In addition, the lack of a universal system of movement codification means that most choreographic symbols are an imperfect form of meaning making. Even dance styles that are heavily codified like classical ballet or Indian dance rely heavily on mime and acting in order to help explicate meaning, and the concern seems to be that if any given choreographic symbol might arouse multiple potential readings then what is the point of analysis in the first place? This is particularly pertinent for the hybridised form of show dance, a form which has historically drawn on numerous movement vocabularies and dance styles. Even the use of a reasonably well codified form of show dance like tap might incite multiple readings depending on the style of tap, music choice, costume, the ethnicity of the performer, and the context in which it is being performed.

All of this comes back to audience reception, the ways in which they attribute meaning to the dance and how they work to decode these meanings in a way that makes the greatest degree of sense to their own sensibilities. In such a multidisciplinary art form, Taylor and Symonds suggest that the meaning of any sign might not always be obvious, and that signs often have multiple meanings (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 27). While choreographic intent will ideally lead the audience towards a dominant reading which mirrors their own reading of the text, audiences can also bring surprising insight into their understanding of texts borne from differences in their knowledge of the world (social knowledge), the medium or genre (textual knowledge) and the relationship between the two (Chandler,

This phenomenon is one that I discovered during my own research journey and will become clearer in Chapter Five when I discuss audience responses to my own work. But for now, in the wake of my discussions of narrative, structure, and the various functions or roles that show dance can take on, I would like to move onto a closer consideration of some of the theories and frameworks that have guided my understanding of how audiences respond to musical theatre dance.

The Musical as Live Performance

Keir Elam suggests that before an audience member can begin decoding a performance text, they first must recognise it as such. A musical is like any theatrical event: “distinguished from other events according to certain organizational and cognitive principles which, like all cultural rules, have to be learned” (Elam, 1980, p. 54). As discussed above, the musical creates meaning using a variety of conventions including song and dance. But it is also a form that often works to deliberately highlight its own theatricality and artificiality, embracing the potentially disruptive or disjunctive capacities of song and dance, while also framing texts as “authentic” or “realistic” for an audience (Taylor M., 2012, p. 75). This is achieved by the conventions of song and dance working together with the dramatic action to create a sense of integration, synthesis, or cohesion, though it can also involve the deliberate reframing of familiar genre conventions in subversive ways.

The inherently theatrical nature of the musical, and its use of song and dance is what makes it a complex performance genre, moving beyond traditional modes of performance found in legitimate or straight drama. In Richard Schechner’s Performance Studies: An Introduction, he divides the act of performing into four modes: ‘being’ (or existing), ‘doing’ (action), ‘showing doing’ (performing) and ‘explaining showing doing’ (Schechner, 2013, p. 28). Regular dance and drama both have the capacity to fit into the modes of ‘doing’ or ‘showing doing’, while Schechner specifically aligns Brechtian theatre to ‘explaining showing doing’. But the musical – and by extension its dance – is a similarly reflexive form:
In ‘showing doing’ there is a consciousness about the act of performing, about the preparation and rehearsal for that performance and about the layered state of performance [...] when the audience is present.

(Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 218)

‘Explaining showing doing’ takes this concept even further, indicating a style of performance that is more aware of its inherently performative nature. Because the musical deliberately employs dramatic techniques that depart from realistic drama – including the use of dance as a mode of expression – the form is an interactive form of theatre, where the audience is invited to participate in an “active process of constructing meaning” (Chandler, 1997, pp. 6-7). An audience’s ability to de-code the meanings that these conventions work to create contributes to their readability – and prospective enjoyment – of any given text.

There is also another consideration to be made here, that audience engagement might also be considered through the lens of Schechner’s performative modes. Audience members may merely be present in the performance space (being), or they may engage more fully through physical actions (doing) such as clapping, cheering, perhaps even dancing along or tapping to the beat. In cases where audience members are very familiar with a text they might sing along, and in even rarer cases they may even be invited to engage directly with the performance text (showing doing). In jukebox musicals like We Will Rock You and Mamma Mia! the audience is invited to sing along at key moments – a convention that relies on the audiences pre-existing knowledge of the music catalogue of Queen and ABBA. The delineation between performer and audience member is even less clearly defined in works that are more immersive like Starlight Express where the set breaks the fourth wall, or more recent offerings like Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812 which sees audience members sitting onstage and performers roving through the audience. Another example is Strictly Ballroom: The Musical where the audience are invited to break the fourth wall on more than one occasion73.

73 The original Sydney production framed the entire auditorium as part of the setting of the show, with the actor playing J. J. Silvers making announcements as the audience entered the space, almost as though they were coming into the auditorium for a real ballroom dancing competition. This effect was compounded by other elements of set dressing, including large posters advertising local businesses mentioned in the show, and the theatre seats were decked out in sparkly, neon Lycra covers. While revisions to the show which occurred for the Melbourne and Brisbane
The inherent live-ness of the musical and the way that audience members experience and engage with these texts in performance has become an especially topical issue in the academic sphere over the last few decades. This has coincided with a push for more analysis of texts in performance, rather than relying on narrative or structural analysis. One of the most fascinating elements about the study of live theatre is that no two performances are ever exactly the same (Bennett, 1997, pp. 20-21). This is a contrast to other forms of media including films and literature that are generally considered static or fixed texts. Ergo, as Bennett suggests, they can theoretically re-create the same experience again and again for an audience or reader. The relationship between audiences and any form of media is complex, and after an initial reading of a fixed text, subsequent readings will undoubtedly draw new understandings or insights from its audience. As Daniel Chandler suggests: “Every reading is always a rewriting” (Chandler, 2007, p. 200).

This is particularly pertinent for musical theatre dance, a form that exists primarily within the realm of live performance, but which has also been shaped by its role in fixed texts like the movie musical. Live and filmed musicals share many of the same visual and aural codes, albeit implemented in slightly different ways and it is in this way they inform one another. In film, emotions and moods are created by the implementation of “colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody and camerawork” (Dyer, 1985, p. 223). This is not dissimilar to the live musical, which has the capacity to create cinematic style effects within in a live performance environment. But although dance on screen can still be an enjoyable and entertaining experience, the concern with converting dance to a flattened image lies in the impact that live dance has on its audience:

Stage dancing has the advantage here in that the human body, itself a three-dimensional instrument, complements (as it moves in) an appropriate space […] In stage dancing, audiences select the images of their own enjoyment. In film and video, the camera makes that selection.

seasons saw the live announcements being cut, the dressing of the auditorium was retained. In addition, the Act Two opener saw the cast welcoming a couple from the audience up onstage to dance, an act which presages the finale where numerous audience members are invited onstage in a recreation of the final scene in the 1992 film.
Kislan suggests that the advantage of seeing a musical live is partly due to the live-ness of the dancing form and the ability of audience members to focus on elements of their choosing. Of the two however, it is the notion of kinaesthetic energy that is most particular to the musical stage. Although dramatic action on the legitimate stage affords a certain amount of energy, the kinaesthetic excitement that musical theatre dance creates is a convention that is not easily replicated in the legitimate theatre.

The study of the relationship between dance, kinaesthesia, and empathy is one that has been discussed by numerous dance and musical theatre scholars. This coincides both with studies of the musical in performance, and specifically its presentation of complex visual and aural codes – including dance. Susan Foster suggests that dance theorists hypothesised that kinaesthetic empathy occurred when audience experienced dance mimetically, or in the words of Taylor and Symonds: “as though they are undertaking the movement” (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 138). For John Martin, his understanding of kinaesthetic empathy was related specifically to emotion (Foster, 2010, pp. 7-8) while for Randy Martin, it was related to social responses (Lepecki, 2004, p. 48). As it turns out, the influence of neuroscience on the field of dance studies has provided a more scientific means of discussing the relationship between dancer and audience member through the discovery of “mirror neurons”, a type of synaptic connection in the brain that lights up during live dance performance (Foster, 2010, p. 1).

The remarkable thing about neuron mirroring is that the same neural pathways light up for both audience members and performers (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 243). Research into contemporary dance has also indicated that the more familiar an audience member is (or becomes) to specific movement styles, the more engaged their neural systems will be when they view a performance (McKechnie & Stevens, 2009, p. 90). In the case of the musical, it has been suggested that the combination of music, words, and movement

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74 While I mostly agree with Kislan, I would suggest that in the live musical the audience gaze can be directed to specific elements of the choreography, but that film musicals merely have much greater scope to do so.
75 One notable exception might be the use of chorus which we have inherited from Greek theatre, however this is a convention that is used in some, not all legitimate theatre texts.
actually activates numerous areas of the brain for the audience including: “mirror neurons, reward areas and areas that create social cohesion and bonding” (Taylor, 2012, p. 170). Essentially, musical theatre audiences experience these texts through a combination of mimetic and kinaesthetic empathy that directly affects their brain, creating pleasure and a sense of community through the shared experience of watching a live performance. This also links musical theatre dance to the concept of “physical witnessing”, a term evoked by both Kislan and Taylor that describes how show dance derives energy from the “live” presence of the audience and the performers, and that the performance atmosphere and the enjoyment of the audience create something like a social and performative feedback loop (Taylor, 2012, p. 148).

**Genre Conventions**

The above section examined some of the ways that audience members experience and engage with live musical theatre texts, now I will be moving on to discuss the role of genre in categorising and analysing musicals, as well as the use of specific genre conventions in the musical. As with any form of categorisation there are potential pitfalls to genre analysis. One is the possibility of analysis becoming restricted due to consumers being pushed towards a dominant reading – although this may be combated by those who deliberately read against the grain (Chandler, 1997, p. 8). It has also been suggested that increased genre familiarity might lead to an audience of passive consumers, a criticism that has been levelled against both mega-musicals and corporate musicals, as well as musical comedies. Further, I would suggest that genre can be used as a tool for enforcing artistic hierarchies, pitting different musical sub-genres against each other.

Another concern about genre is that the distinctions between genres are often easier to recognise than they are to define, with Chandler suggesting that boundaries between genres are often unclear: “It is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between one genre and another. Genres overlap, and there are

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76 Social mirroring may also go some way to explaining the cultural standard of the standing ovation on Broadway, when it remains a reasonably rare phenomenon in both Australia and Britain. See: (Billington, 2008), (Brantley, 2012), (Cox G., 2015), (Schulman, 2017).
‘mixed genres” (Chandler, 1997, p. 2)\textsuperscript{77}. In addition, the definition of exactly what is and isn’t a musical is a point of some contention. In almost any current historical, theoretical, or practical text regarding the musical you will be able to find a definition that cites music, drama and movement as the prerequisites of the musical genre. While the broadness of this definition certainly works to cover the musical and its various sub-genres, it could also be used to define almost any type of music theatre from classical times to today. So how then do we demarcate musicals from other forms of music theatre? And how do we differentiate sub-genres of musical from each other?

Music theatre is often considered the original “mixed genre” (Salzman & Dési, 2008, p. 294) with the combination of music, dance, and spoken word having been used to create performances as varied as Greek drama, pantomime, opera, and the modern musical. In order to be music theatre, Salzman and Dési suggest that it must be music driven. They also assert that the difference between opera and musicals lies primarily in audience expectations, the training of the performers, and the venue it is performed in:

Music, language, vocalization, and physical movement [must] exist, interact, or stand side by side in some kind of equality but performed by different performers and in a different social ambiance than works normally categorized as operas (performed by opera singers in opera houses) or musicals (performed by theater singers in “legitimate” theaters).

(Salzman & Dési, 2008, p. 5)

This is a viewpoint that has also been corroborated by musical theatre composer Stephen Sondheim:

Essentially, the difference, I think, is in the expectation of the audience […] primarily an opera is something done in an opera house in front of an opera audience. And a show, or whatever you want to call it – musical play, musical comedy – is something done in either a Broadway or Off Broadway theater, in front of that kind of audience.

(Sondheim & Rorem, 2000)

\textsuperscript{77} Although Chandler is discussing genre in the context of film studies, this sentiment might be applied to any study of genre.
While both consider the importance of audience expectations, my primary issue with this viewpoint is that the genre of a music theatre text is not necessarily defined by the venue in which it is performed. A musical does not become an opera if it is performed at an opera house, just as an opera does not become a musical if it is performed on a Broadway stage. This is consistent with the reasoning that although there are certain musicals that adopt operatic conventions or sensibilities, they are still musicals. It is important then, to interrogate the relationship between music theatre forms, and specifically the differences as well as the similarities.

In many cases this comes down to a consideration of aesthetics, as suggested by McMillin in the introduction of *The Musical as Drama* (McMillin, 2006, p. 5). His reading of aesthetics in this instance relates to the differing ways that the musical utilises the musico-dramatic elements of song, drama, and movement and can assist not only in the categorisation of the musical as a genre unto itself, but also further sub-genres like the concept musical, dansical, or jukebox musical. “Conventions,” McMillin suggests, “are things we rarely think about, and our taking them for granted renders invisible the aesthetic work that is always going on” (McMillin, 2006, p. x). Regarding musical theatre dance, there are certain functions or roles that it can perform within the overarching structure of a musical that provide audiences with a better understanding of the type of musical they are watching. In addition, there are specific stylistic conventions that show dance utilises to create meaning including the creation of visual symbolism which is related to the use of recognisable movement styles and steps, groupings and forms of patterning, and even elements of casting. These are all factors that I have already touched on earlier in this chapter in my discussion of the narrative and structural functions and roles of show dance, and my introduction of the importance of visual meaning making and the role of semiotics in the musical.

In this next segment I will be moving on from a broader consideration of the musical genre to a more focussed discussion on the specific conventions that shaped my own praxis. My research hypothesis involved the subversion of traditional modes of performance within the musical, with the goal of using audience expectations to subvert meaning. For my own praxis this involved a consideration of the use of camp, reflexivity, and disruption within the musical, as well as a focus on the expression of violence through dance, and the
depersonalisation of the ensemble. At this juncture I would like to further clarify my use of some of these key terms, as they are vital to my discussion of 2084 in the next chapter. My elucidation of camp, reflexivity, and disruption will be followed by a consideration of audience expectations, and the reframing or subversion of pleasure and entertainment to create dramatic, tragic, or provocative effects.

**Camp, reflexivity, and disruption**

My use of all three of these terms aligns with the work of the primary musical theatre theorists I have already engaged with above – namely Scott McMillin and Millie Taylor. Further, my understanding of these terms has also been aided by the perspective of scholars from other areas. This includes the work of Bertolt Brecht, Susan Sontag’s ‘Notes on Camp’, as well as a working understanding of the musical in performance as an audience member that comes from my own lived experience as a consumer of musical texts. Of these, it is Taylor’s examination of excess and loss in the musical that is most integral to my own research. Her utilisation of this framework supports her broader discussions regarding a variety of conventions common to the musical genre including camp, reflexivity, and disruption. These terms and Taylor’s discussion of them formed the basis for my own theoretical work, as well as my creative praxis in the creation of the choreography for 2084.

Camp, as defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary, denotes a style of “absurdly exaggerated” expression that is “so outrageously artificial, affected, inappropriate, or out-of-date as to be considered amusing” (Merriam Webster, 2020). It can also be either a form of personal or creative expression, usually combining elements of popular culture with high art – something that has already been identified as an integral component for the musical throughout its long and varied history. In Susan Sontag’s 1964 treatise on camp, she discusses it more specifically as a mode of aestheticism that emphasises “artifice and exaggeration” (Sontag, 2009, p. 275). She also links camp specifically to representations of gender and sexuality, as well as the concepts of ‘kitsch’ and ‘bad art’. The essential element of camp, according to Sontag, is

78 Particularly androgyny and homosexuality.
the serious being presented simultaneously with elements of “the exaggerated, the fantastical, the passionate, and the naïve” (Sontag, 2009, p. 280). In other words: “Camp is art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is ‘too much’” (Sontag, 2009, p. 283).

This view is corroborated by Millie Taylor, who suggests that “the ‘camp’ of musical theatre derives from a particular type of clear and acknowledged debt to other forms of entertainment and to the clichés that have developed in musical theatre itself”, and further that the term camp is used to “denote a particular level of style, artifice and cliché in musical theatre” (Taylor, 2012, p. 151). But camp is not merely an aesthetic mode – it is also an element that influences how audience members read and understand texts. In the case of camp, Sontag suggests that there must be a degree of distance between the original aesthetic form that is being discussed, and its audience (Sontag, 2009, pp. 280-284). Further, Sontag suggests that camp invokes feelings of sentimentality or nostalgia, an important tool when we consider the reflexive – and self-reflexive – nature of the musical.

In this context, reflexivity is best described as the overt and often ironic reflecting of specific conventions relating to form or genre, while self-reflexivity ties into forms that reference their own artificiality (Merriam Webster, 2020). The musical is well known for ironic or humorous self-reflection, and particularly for poking fun at the specific conventions that make the genre what it is. The new musical comedy is but one example of a sub-genre that revels in the camp sensibilities of the early musical comedy, while also incorporating structural elements from the integrated musical tradition, allowing for a more realistic cohesion of book and number. Entertainment and spectacle are often created by utilising specific dance styles like tap, or by drawing on specific dance formats like the showstopper. The effect that this tends to evoke in most audience members includes feelings of nostalgia, created in conjunction with elements of comedy, pleasure, and entertainment. These conventions are also often presented in conjunction with other narrative and performance-based clichés.²⁹

²⁹ Although the word cliché might be considered to convey largely negative connotations, in this instance as in the quotes from Millie Taylor above, I believe it conveys the links between camp and the musical more clearly than other terminologies might. My employment of this term within my writing is not intended to denigrate any particular form or functions of the musical, but merely to indicate that there are certain archetypal elements it utilises that are more suggestive of its historical association with forms of ‘low art’. To ignore this is to sideline important cultural considerations of the musical, and the ways in which musical texts are read by contemporary audiences.
and can be utilised to create complex meta-narratives that rely on the use of conventions specific to the musical to create meaning for an audience. Camp and reflexivity are not only used to create comedic effect. Many musicals that deal with political or subversive themes take advantage of the theatrical and performative aspect of the musical to challenge the status quo in entertaining ways.

The notion of self-reflexivity is one that I have engaged with already in this chapter through the work of Elam and Taylor, and it is realised most profoundly in the disruptive, one might even say distancing effect that occurs in the use of inter- and intra-textual elements within the musical. Intertextuality relates to the conscious referencing of elements already found in other texts, both from the musical theatre canon and other forms of performance media. Taylor suggests that intertextuality can range from direct quotations, to the evocation or affection of specific imagery, or even the presence or invocation of well-known performers. Further she suggests that an understanding of these references generally indicates a heightened awareness and understanding of genre (Taylor M., 2012, p. 74). Intertextuality also aligns well with audience reception theory because:

[It] introduces a way of thinking about a text as unstable, messy, diverse and excessive [where] each performance is created for and by the audience and every performance experience adds to the sum of cultural knowledge from which new performances are created.

(Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 215)

Like most live performance genres, the meaning that is constructed by musical theatre texts is partly the result of multiple musicals being compared against each other. Intertextuality then is a broader consideration of the reflexive nature of the genre, and how an understanding of a variety of musical theatre texts helps to build audience understanding of a musical text in performance. This can be furthered by an audience’s level of engagement, their understanding of the references that are being made, and whether the performance outcomes they anticipate are ultimately fulfilled or subverted. Audience understanding might take several different forms: personal knowledge on the themes, subject matter or (in the case of adaptations) a pre-existing relationship to the original source material; knowledge of the creative process, the performers and their careers taken from
previous interactions with them (interviews, books, social media etcetera); as well as wider knowledge of performance. Taylor suggests that the subversion of traditional narrative structures might then include the use of meta-narratives, montages, or flashbacks, while the use of parody, irony, camp, and pastiche often work to highlight the theatricality of song and dance to comedic (and sometimes dramatic) effect.

If intertextuality involves a broader understanding of a musical through its relation to other texts, intratextuality works to create meaning in a much more insular way. For musicals, it relates specifically to references being made to elements within the same performance text, as in the Wagnerian leitmotif. Much of the analysis of intratextuality focusses on repeated musical themes and lyrics (Taylor M., 2012, p. 75), tending as always towards the evolution of textual and musicological elements. However, as we have seen from Mueller’s analysis of the film work of Fred Astaire, choreographers often utilise visual motifs in their work, whether through the recurrence of specific steps, patterning, or dance styles. This is a practice that links visual elements pertaining to character and narrative together within the overarching world of a show. I would argue that intratextuality can also be discussed regarding the external influences of the choreographer and the work – specifically through their own training and practice, while the influences that they have drawn from other media and performance texts form a necessary part of the intertextuality.

The final term I will be covering here is disruption, and specifically the way that it ties together the notions of camp and reflexivity, as well as Brecht’s theory of Verfremdungseffekt all of which I have discussed earlier this chapter. As mentioned above, the use of camp and reflexivity in the musical both have the capacity to create a distancing effect for audience members by highlighting the theatrical nature of the genre and drawing attention to the use of specific conventions. In most instances, this distance works to create comedy, humour, pleasure, and entertainment through audience recognition of familiar conventions. However, this technique can also be used to create dramatic or tragic effect, most often through the juxtaposition or subversion of audience expectations. In the musical this is most often achieved through the absence or disruption of specific musical theatre conventions – namely song and dance.
This ties specifically into Taylor’s discussions of loss and excess, and how the juxtaposition between them can be used to create a multitude of effects.

When I discuss disruption in relation to show dance, my intention is to examine the relationship between them and the various functions that disruption can serve when used in conjunction with dance within the context of a live musical performance. To that end I suggest that show dance has the capacity to disrupt or be a disruptive force within the musical, but equally it can also be disrupted by other elements within a production, and that the scaffolding or framing of this disruption for an audience allows show dance to either enforce or subvert audience expectations. Further, I would suggest that the subversion of audience expectations can also be equated as a specific form of disruption – the disruption of an audiences’ reading of the text in performance. This disruption strongly evokes Brecht’s theory of *Verfremdungseffekt*, McMillin’s discussion of disjunction in the musical, and Taylor’s work on juxtaposition, loss and excess.

When we consider disruption and show dance, perhaps the most notable example is the early musical comedy, a form that deliberately embraced the disruptive capacities of show dance. In the comedic or romantic musicals that were typical during the development of the genre, the interruption of the narrative with song and dance is primarily aligned with the creation of comedy, humour, pleasure, and entertainment. This practice is still utilised today in forms such as the new musical comedy – albeit with a certain degree of influence from the integrated musical model. The divertissements of the musical comedy have evolved into the highly reflexive use of historical show dance styles and conventions, as in the camp of the showstopper. Show dance can also disrupt more than the narrative, as evidenced by Busby Berkeley’s deliberate employment of syncopation in his choreography, a disruption of not only the dominant choreographic practices of the day but also of the dominant rhythms of the music. Here syncopation serves as a way of disrupting audience expectations of how the dance looks and sounds in conjunction with the music. Another form of disruption can occur in the juxtaposition between movement and the spoken word – a tool which has been utilised by many choreographers to great comedic effect. Although choreographers tend to align their work with rather than against the lyrics or dialogue, by choosing movements that contrast rather than enforce
what the lyrics are saying, this could also be argued to be a form of disruption – albeit one that is often utilised to create moments of comedy and pleasurable entertainment. In Chapter Three I discussed the convention of the little girl on the end of the line, but some more contemporary examples would be the girl that falls down in ‘Many A New Day’ from Oklahoma! or the character of Janet in ‘Show Off’ from The Drowsy Chaperone. In these cases, it is the juxtaposition of the movement with the lyrics or dialogue that creates the humour in these scenes, in conjunction with the juxtaposition of the movement of one specific character against other the characters/dancers within the scene.

The above examples are all arguably pleasurable forms of disruption, providing exciting and sometimes comedic effects. But disruption also has the capacity to create powerful theatrical effects, particularly when it is framed in a way that creates negative rather than positive connotations. This can be achieved equally by dance serving as a disruptive force, or alternately by dance being physically disrupted in some way. It is also often assisted by the deliberate subversion of audience expectations of the functions and roles that show dance fulfils within the musical. The first of these, dance as a form of disruption that is aligned with negative connotations, usually relates to dance that works to disrupt the plot. It is theorised by McMillin in his discussion of “reversal” or “turning points” where the shift between book and number creates a sudden juxtaposition in tone (McMillin, 2006, pp. 47-49). This shift can occur in a variety of ways, with McMillin citing ‘The Rain In Spain’ from My Fair Lady as an example where the mood of the scene moves from exhaustion to jubilant celebration through the shift from book to number. This is a scene where the frustrations of the book scene give way to a happy, exuberant song and dance number, and might be regarded as typical of the musical genre. The reverse of this is of course the use of song and/or dance as a disruptive force that is coded as dramatic, evoking negatively coded emotions.

Often, the disruptive nature of these numbers uses juxtaposition to tremendous effect, as in the violent gang rape of Anita in West Side Story by the Jets which is expressed through dance and movement. This scene is objectively made even more horrifying in the wake of the playful exuberance of the previous number ‘Gee Officer Krupke’, as well as the audience’s prior knowledge that Maria is not actually dead. The heinous actions of the Jets results in Anita lying
about the fate of Maria, a lie which ultimately results in the tragic death of their friend Tony. Another more contemporary example is the upbeat song and dance ‘Victory Swing’ in *Allegiance* which creates a horrifying juxtaposition to the devastating bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that have been dramatized in the previous number. The dramatic shift in mood indicated by the shift between numbers here can also be equated to the shifts that sometimes take place within a number, as in ‘Laurey Makes Up Her Mind’ where her dream suddenly becomes a nightmare. In all these examples, it is the use of juxtaposition that gives these scenes their dramatic power – between movement and stillness, horror and comedy, pleasure and pain.

While dance as a disruptive force often involves a shift from book to number, number to number, or a shift in mood within a number itself, the shift from number to book scene can also be disruptive. Because dance is considered such an integral component of the musical, the sudden absence of it can create a powerful effect. Often, this is facilitated by literally stripping away the conventions that usually work to support the choreography; the absence or loss of music, a plot related interruption that brings a dance number to a premature end, or even the removal of their fellow performers. In addition, there is dramatic power to be in a movement that is aborted or a dance number that is left incomplete. In *Cats*, where dance is one of the primary methods that the characters express themselves, Grizabella is set apart because her attempts to dance and to connect physically with the other Jellicle cats is continually unsuccessful. She obviously has a desire to engage physically and dance with her kin, however her aborted attempts at preening and dancing instead illustrate her loneliness and her isolation from the other characters. It is not until they finally touch her and engage with her physically that she is truly accepted. A similar effect can be seen in *Wicked* during ‘Dancing Through Life’ when Elphaba dances alone and in silence. It is not until Galinda steps in and transforms Elphaba’s awkward gyrations into a stirring dance duet that Elphaba gains acceptance from her peers, and friendship from Galinda.

The effect of these unfinished movements and incomplete dances is not dissimilar to the effect that can be achieved through an unfinished piece of dialogue or song: “an unfinished phrase or a word that is out of context leaves the reader perplexed, the same is true for the listener to music” (Taylor, 2012, p. 163.)
62). Indeed, McMillin’s discussion of the uncompleted number suggests that the dramatic tension that is integral to the build-up and completion of a dance number, and further that the disruption or culmination of this tension will have varying effects depending on how it is framed for an audience (McMillin, 2006, pp. 116-119). The examples given above both result in a positive communal response through the implementation of what McMillin calls the ensemble effect, a convention whereby a number builds into a moment of theatrical unison when the entire cast sing and dance as one (McMillin, 2006, p. 79). The subversion of the ensemble effect where this unison is stripped away usually works to create a sense of loss, particularly when the dance is disrupted in a sudden manner, surprising the audience. This is often facilitated by a shift from number to book, with two pertinent examples being ‘Dancin’ On The Sidewalk’ from Fame, and ‘Get Happy’ from King Kong. Both numbers are disrupted; the former by the sudden absence of music and support of the ensemble, the latter by the physical disruption of Kong. In both cases the dance is either interrupted or is unable to be completed, leaving the audience with a sense of incompleteness or disjunction.

We have already seen that dance has the capacity to disrupt other conventions within the musical, and equally that these conventions are able to disrupt dance as well. The final element of disruption that I would like to discuss here is the disruption of audience expectations, and how the deliberate subversion or reframing of traditional show dance forms works as a powerful dramatic tool. In fact, I would argue that part of the reason that show dance has power as a dramatic convention is because of the broader cultural associations that audiences have with the musical, and specifically its use of dance. This is something I have discussed at some length already, namely the historical alignment of show dance with pleasure and entertainment, as well as comedy and the creation of humour. This viewpoint is also corroborated by the reflexive humour found in many musicals, which often highlights the theatricality of the form in order to garner laughs from the audience. Although we might like to believe that all musicals are fluffy romantic comedies, the truth of the matter is that many musicals (both comedic and dramatic) deal with uncomfortable or negatively coded themes relating to issues of race, class, violence, as well as sex and gender. Further, some of the most poignant and emotionally affecting musical
theatre texts are those that have explored these themes not only through the songs and book scenes, but also through the dance.

The subversion or reframing of traditional dance conventions can be a powerful tool. By aligning dance with both disruption and negatively coded emotions, by stripping away the conventions that make the musical and its dance pleasurable, there is the capacity to create an array of fascinating, dramatic effects through dance. This is the cornerstone of my research both academic and practical, the employment of camp, reflexivity, and disruption in conjunction with each other in order to make the familiar appear strange and alienating. Framed correctly, show dance that is utilised in this way can ideally be used to create a sense of distance or discomfort for an audience, inviting them to think more deeply about the text that they are engaging with, and the performative nature of what they are seeing onstage.

**Audience Expectations and the subversion of pleasure and entertainment**

Historically, the musical has thrived as a form of entertainment that provides sensations of pleasure through the performative excesses of song and dance. So, what exactly is the relationship between musical theatre dance, audience pleasure, and entertainment? Further, how might audience expectations of musical theatre dance be used to guide their responses to a musical theatre text? In his discussion of the musical as a utopian form, Richard Dyer defines entertainment as follows:

> A type of performance produced for profit, performed before a generalised audience (the ‘public’) by a trained, paid group who do nothing else but produce performances which have the sole (conscious) aim of providing pleasure

(Dyer, 1985, p. 222)

The link Dyer draws here between entertainment and pleasure is particularly pertinent in relation to the study of musical theatre, a performance genre which is arguably very much a product of the capitalist society in which we live. Although artistry and commercial success are not mutually exclusive, I would argue that the commercial nature of musicals is often highlighted in a more negative way than other forms of live performance that have also been commercially
successfully. I would also suggest that the demand for entertainment and escapism strongly influenced the development of the musical genre; particularly during its formative years in the early twentieth century, which saw two World Wars bookend The Great Depression.

Despite the huge artistic shift which took place in the mid to late twentieth century where the musical and its dance arguably became an art form in its own right, in many ways both the musical and its dance are still defined by the foundations on which it was built, namely as a form of entertainment that was “light-hearted and escapist” (Taylor, 2012, p. 106). There is also the historical association of dance with the sensual and sexual to consider, particularly when we consider the stereotype of the beautiful showgirl. As a commercial enterprise, musicals have often relied on beautiful women in revealing costumes to sell tickets. In addition, the conflation of showgirl imagery with prostitutes and strippers can be observed in a variety of music theatre forms including burlesque and variety, playing into broader archetypes for female characters including the femme fatale. But sexual pleasure is not the only kind of pleasure that the musical deals in, and it is certainly not the only type of pleasure that musical theatre dance can provide.

In Daniel Chandler’s discussion of genre, he explores a variety of ways that pleasure might be generated for an audience, including:

1. Familiarity or recognition of the features of a genre
2. Surprise when a text manipulates familiar conventions
3. Making predictions about what might come next
4. Making moral judgements on characters
5. Emotional pleasure (e.g. empathy or escapism)
6. Pleasure derived from repetition and difference
7. Being part of a community and sharing the experience with other like-minded individuals

(Chandler, 1997, p. 9)

Not only can each of these elements be linked directly to the musical, most can also be linked specifically to the use of dance within the musical. Musical theatre

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80 This is most often applied to elements of the narrative, especially the dialogue, but equally it could also relate to the progression of steps within a dance number, or the melody and lyrics in a song. Much of the comedy in musicals relates to small and deliberate subversions of audience expectations to create visual gags. However, this effect can also be used to create dramatic or tragic effect.
dance relies on both repetition and difference to create pleasure through the creation of dynamic and interesting choreography, and emotional pleasure can be gleaned from the mere act of watching dancers perform, as we have seen in earlier discussions of communal witnessing, neuron mirroring, and the creation of kinaesthetic empathy. Although these functions were all elements that I found myself cognizant of during my praxis, it is the first three that provides the most suitable frame through which to engage with my own research. Namely, the use of familiar conventions which are then manipulated, subverted, or reframed in such a way that they surprise or challenge the preconceived notions of audience members.

While numerous scholars have suggested that an audience is more likely to understand and be entertained by a performance that uses familiar or expected genre conventions, some of the most successful or emotionally affecting musicals that I have engaged with during my studies, have actually been those that actively work to challenge or subvert audience expectations. The reason that these texts are so effective are twofold. Firstly, they rely on audiences being somewhat familiar with the musical genre and its conventions, including the expectation that a musical will be pleasurable and entertaining to watch. A certain degree of pleasure then, is created through the recognition of or familiarity with specific conventions. But too much familiarity can also lead to predictable, and obvious texts that can result in audience boredom. This is where the manipulation or challenging of familiar conventions becomes integral to maintaining a sense of engagement and enjoyment of the text, inviting audiences to predict what will happen next and then either enforcing or subverting their expectations.

In musical comedies, this subversion of expectations usually (but not always) results in a humorous outcome where show dance continues to play into the pleasurable and entertaining elements aspects of its heritage. In dramatic musicals where dance is often used to explore uncomfortable themes, the expression of negatively coded emotions using dance could be said to offer a form of pleasure through a combination of kinaesthetic empathy and catharsis. In addition, there are also comedies which utilise pleasure and entertainment as a means of exploring darker themes, often relying on the camp excesses of the musical to make their themes more palatable for a mainstream audience. These

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texts often present “complex or unpleasant feelings […] in a way that makes them seem uncomplicated, direct and vivid” (Dyer, 1985, p. 226). Intriguingly, this is a technique that I have identified as being used in numerous science fiction musicals, including *We Will Rock You* which I will be discussing later.

The suggestion that I make here is that the use of pleasure and entertainment in the musical is not necessarily confined to the expression of positively coded themes and emotions. This brings me to a consideration of Roland Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text*, in which he explores the idea of texts of pleasure, and texts of bliss\(^\text{82}\). Where pleasurable texts tend to be more comfortable, the text of bliss is often more disruptive:

Text of pleasure: contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to *comfortable* practice of reading.

Text of bliss: imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts […] unsettles the readers historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.

(Barthes, 1975, p. 14)

Another means of differentiating between the two is that “pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss cannot” (Barthes, 1975, p. 21). Regarding the musical, we might consider the integrated or cohesive musical as a more pleasurable text due to its submission to traditional narrative conventions and the attempts it makes to smooth over the disjunction that might occur in the shift between book and number. In comparison, a text of bliss is more likely to subscribe to a more Brechtian aesthetic, as in a musical that works to highlight the performative or theatrical nature of the musical genre in order to make a more political or provocative text.

By deliberately leaving gaps for the audience to infer their own meaning, texts of bliss have the capacity to create a sense of alienation or disruption for an audience. This is a phenomenon I have already discussed in some depth, as it

\(^{82}\) Bliss, translated from the French jouissance can also relate to ‘pleasure’, ‘enjoyment’, and ‘orgasm’ depending on the context in which it is being used (Cambridge University Press, 2019). This is particularly important when we consider the sexual or sensual elements of the text of bliss, and the relationship between dance and sexuality.
formed the foundation of my research. While most musicals would be considered texts of pleasure, I would suggest that many musical texts, 2084 included, have the capacity contain elements of both pleasure and bliss. Although 2084 is a text that relies on a well-defined set of signs that are designed to invoke specific readings from an audience, there are certain elements specifically that are left to interpretation or that are deliberately disruptive – including the dance. The choreography in 2084 was quite deliberately constructed to disrupt or subvert audience expectations at key points throughout the narrative and this was achieved through a combination of utilising dance as a disruptive or unsettling force, the disruption of dance by other elements, and by framing the use of dance in unusual and sometimes unsettling ways. 2084 was deliberately designed this way to provoke deeper readings from the audience and was also an integral consideration of the inclusion of human participant research in the form of anonymous audience surveys.

Their reading of 2084 was aided in part by its transformative nature and its strong intertextual nods not only to other musical texts, but also to other science fiction musicals, as well as to the source text George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four. For the choreography I drew on imagery ranging from traditional musical theatre dance styles, to military drills and Nazi marches83, as well as more abstract explorations of dance and movement. 2084 therefore is intertextually linked to other texts not only through a consideration of narrative and genre, but also specifically through its movement. This is consistent with contemporary practices within the field, and particularly the influence of postmodernism which can be seen specifically in the popularity of revivals, adaptations, jukebox musicals, and the more recent bricolage musicals. These sub-genres all rely on reframing elements that are already somewhat familiar to an audience, whether a specific narrative, the music catalogue of an artist, or a historical era. Rather than aiming for total realism or historical accuracy, creators use the conventions of musical theatre to connect with audiences, presenting

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83 Several precedents to my own work in terms of movement that signifies personal oppression include Nazi propaganda film Triumph of the Will (1935), Angelin Preljocaj’s reinvention of Prokofiev’s Romeo and Juliet (1990) which reimagined the famous lovers in an Orwellian context, and Steven Berkoff’s Coriolanus (1996) which sets the action of the play in the 1930s and evokes the rise of fascism in Europe.
sometimes challenging narratives in a way that on the surface seems more comfortable and palatable than it might in other forms.

Some of the characteristic features of postmodern texts include: “a fascination with quoting material from other sources (sampling in pop music), piecing together texts like a patchwork quilt (like a mash-up) and playing around with ideas of truth, the real and the imaginary (virtual reality)” (Taylor & Symonds, 2014, p. 117). While not all of these are applicable to all musicals, and certainly not to 2084, I feel that the influence of postmodernism on popular culture is one that cannot be discounted. In addition, the postmodern text is one that works to create meaning through intertextuality and self-reflexivity, as well as the deconstruction and fragmentation of texts. Within 2084, the creative team deliberately utilised the comfortable, pleasurable excesses of the musical form to order to engage with uncomfortable themes, creating a transformative work based on a well-known literary property. Indeed, the transformative nature of the text was one of the primary reasons cited for audiences coming to see the show.

**Issues with Subverting Audience Expectations**

There are of course concerns about the effectiveness of subverting audience expectations, namely that if a text is unsuccessful in challenging these expectations, that audience members might feel completely alienated from the text in question. Two contemporary examples that I engaged with as part of my field research for this exegesis include the numbers ‘Special FX’ from the original Melbourne run of *King Kong* and ‘All of London Is Here Tonight’ from *Finding Neverland*. Both are fantasy sequences, the former revealing Ann Darrow’s private insecurities about her acting capabilities while they are en route to Skull Island, and the latter demonstrating the isolation and discomfort that J. M. Barrie feels amongst London’s social elite. While the content of both of numbers was visually striking and well performed, the anachronistic nature of the music and choreography as well as the way the transition into these numbers was staged resulted in a confusing effect. Even as an audience member who was well versed in musical conventions, it took me until partway through both routines before I realised that they were supposed to be fantasy or dream sequences.
As a number, ‘Special FX’ was both visually and musically anachronistic for the 1930s setting. In addition, I found myself perplexed and stymied by the rampant sexualisation of the female chorus. Not only were they clad in black vinyl dominatrix leotards, at one point in the choreography the dancers all lined up to gleefully slap each other’s rear ends. Meanwhile, Ann Darrow spent much of the number attempting to illustrate her clumsiness and lack of sex appeal by awkwardly swaggering about the stage in sky high stilettos. This number was both confusing and deeply uncomfortable for me as an audience member, particularly as a young woman. Despite their best efforts to juxtapose the beautiful chorus girls in their sexy costumes with the humorous antics of Ann, something just didn’t quite gel. Similarly confused was the contrast between the hyper-stylised movements of the chorus in ‘All of London Is Here Tonight’ compared to the naturalistic acting of Matthew Morrison as J. M. Barrie. Once again, I found myself almost to the end of the number before I became cognizant of the fact that the audience was seeing Barrie’s somewhat fantastical vision of the other characters. Discussions with my lyricist and research partner Sarah after seeing this show corroborated the fact that she too had been confused by this number, and that it had taken a similar length of time for her to understand how they had framed it.

Chandler suggests that challenging specific elements of any genre must be done with care and consideration, however, he also suggests that, “Competent readers of a genre are not generally confused when some of their initial expectations are not met” (Chandler, 1997, p. 8). One of the major concerns that my creative collaborators and I had during our development of 2084 was that we might end up creating a sense of alienation and discomfort for our audiences – just not the kind that we were hoping to. After all, if professional choreographic practitioners working on major musicals like King Kong or Finding Neverland could create numbers like ‘Special FX’ or ‘All of London Is Here Tonight’ which so fundamentally failed to engage with scholars, what then would prevent us from falling into the same trap? The study of musical theatre dance is already a phenomenological field and is incredibly dependant on how the text is read in performance – thus my interest in audience reception theory. And specifically, how audience expectations are shaped by their pre-existing knowledge of musical theatre conventions, with a specific focus on the functions of show dance.
Because musical theatre dance has a series of identifiable functions or roles that it might perform, the subversion or disruption of these genre expectations would ideally result in powerful responses from our audience. While the employment of tension or juxtaposition between aural and visual coding in the musical can be used to great comedic effect, equally I would suggest that this tension can be used to explore darker or more dramatic themes. Within my own praxis, an understanding of genre and genre conventions was utilised to subvert or reframe traditional conventions of show dance to create dramatic rather than comedic effect and I would argue that the reason the choreography was successful for audiences watching 2084 was because they were rooted in the audiences working knowledge of genre conventions and audience expectations, as well as being modelled after the successful work of other choreographic practitioners working in the field.

Conclusion

Whatever else might be said about the genre, musical theatre dance is not meaningless. Whether it is being utilised to entertain, to engage, or to educate, musical theatre dance always serves some function within the musical. As Wolf and Gennaro suggest:

> Every musical employs movement with purpose. Dance tells a story, dance reveals character, dance represents place and time, dance expresses emotion, dance evokes a metaphor. It is up to the dance scholar of musical theater to decipher, interpret, and analyze those meanings.

(Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 164)

In addition to the structural and narrative functions that musical theatre dance performs, it also has the capacity to provide context regarding the broader cultural background in which it was produced. Scholarly analysis of musical theatre dance not only expands our understanding of the role of the dancing body within the musical genre, it can also help: “speak to social ideas and themes prompted by the musical but extending beyond the proscenium arc” (Dorsey, 2011, pp. 340-341). Analysis will of course differ depending on whether musical theatre dance is being considered from its original historical context, or from a more contemporary perspective. Similarly, familiarity with the form, as well as with the
broader frameworks or theories that govern the creation and analysis of musical theatre dance will yield different results.

My own research, which is multi-modal, is concerned not only with theory, but also with choreographic praxis. In Chapter Five I will be engaging with the notion of praxis, and more specifically the process I undertook to devise the choreography for my creative artefact, 2084. This will involve a consideration of how traditional academic research shaped my analysis of the choreographic texts which inspired my praxis, as well as a consideration of the anonymous audience responses that were collected during the run of the show. This chapter will serve to further understanding about my research, and how the intersection between praxis and theory allowed me to better understand how the subversion of audience expectations through dance could be used to create dramatic, theatrical effects within the musical. This chapter has also been influenced by my autoethnographical approach to my research, including the use of rigorous self-reflection on both my process, and the completed creative artefact.
CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH AND PRAXIS
This chapter demonstrates the intersection between my traditional academic research and my creative praxis. It includes an analysis of show dance in new musical comedies, using this as a point of reference for a contemporary audience understanding of the role of dance within the musical. This is then used to position my own research which involved the deliberate subversion of these expectations to create deliberate and dramatic effects. The chapter continues with an analysis of the performance texts and practitioners whose work inspired my praxis and concludes with an analysis of my creative artefact ‘2084: A Musical’ and considerations for any future staging’s of the work.

Embodied and Learned Knowledge

As discussed in the second half of Chapter Two, my research has been shaped by a consideration of Nelson’s arts praxis model, as well as Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web. The former accounts for my prior knowledge of the subject area, gleaned in part from my background as a dancer, performer and choreographer, as well as from my perspective as a consumer. I would like to acknowledge here that my understanding of musical theatre has been irrevocably shaped by my autoethnographic frame. This has included my engagement with film musicals and animated movie musicals, as well as with live musicals in Australia, on the West End, and Broadway. While this has occurred throughout my life, it has been most notably shaped during the field research that I conducted during my candidature. My understanding of these texts has been augmented by the studies I have undertaken in theatre and drama, aiding my critical engagement with them through an exploration of the musical from a theoretical and practical perspective.

In this chapter, I will be discussing my creative artefact 2084, linking my choreographic and collaborative process to specific musicals which served as the inspiration for my own choreography. I will also be applying some of the theories which underpinned my praxis to my field research and praxis, drawing on the groundwork already completed in Chapter Four. This will be introduced by a brief discussion of the use of dance in new musical comedies to create pleasure and comedy, and how the deliberate re-framing or subversion of traditional show dance might be used to evoke emotions such as empathy, loss, and pain for an audience. As part of this I will be discussing the disjunctive potential of dance within the musical, and how the absence or disruption of dance (loss) when
juxtaposed with the use of conventions such as camp and parody (excess) can be used to create dramatic effects that subvert audience expectations. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the creative artefact 2084, using the theoretical frameworks already discussed to engage with elements of the choreography and staged movement. This will also involve some more personal, autoethnographic reflections on the project, the audience feedback we received, and some potential considerations for the future of the project.

**Disruption and cohesion – the power of juxtaposition**

In Chapter Four, I discussed the important role that genre conventions and audience expectations play in relation to their understanding of musicals and show dance. While show dance has historically been used to create entertainment and pleasure for an audience, it has been clearly established that this is not its only function. Often, dance which deliberately works to subvert or reframe audience expectations can be used to create complex, dramatic effects for an audience. Some of the most emotionally affecting musical theatre choreography I have personally engaged with as an audience member has involved a subversion of my expectations, including *Fame* which provides an autoethnographic frame for my research and indeed, this exegesis. In the years since, I have only become more cognizant of musical theatre dance which subverts or reframes traditional conventions to create dramatic rather than comedic effect.

While I base this in part on my own experience as an audience member, I acknowledge that not all audience members will engage with or understand performance texts in the same way. However, the fact remains that musical theatre is a form of popular entertainment, and one of its primary goals is to communicate effectively with its audience:

> Every element of a musical is functional and meant to be legible. Every gesture, every movement phrase, every dance number intends to communicate something specific about the character, the world, and the story.

*(Wolf & Gennaro, 2015, p. 151)*

This reinforces my own suggestion that by framing or positioning their choreography in certain ways, practitioners have the capacity to create a variety
of effects ranging from the creation of pleasure and the provision of entertainment and comedy, as well as the potential for discomfort or even alienation. In order to do this, there must first be an understanding of the functions that dance can perform, and of the dominant reading that an audience might yield from it.

In *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment*, Millie Taylor discusses the power of juxtaposition in relation to loss and excess within the musical. In my own research, I have also considered the juxtaposition between cohesion and disruption, and how the framing of the dance within a musical contributes to the way audiences read it. This leads me to my consideration of the new musical comedy, a term that I coined in Chapter Three as a suggested sub-genre of the contemporary musical. The new musical comedy is typified by its utilisation of codes and conventions taken from traditional musical comedies, reinterpreting them through a contemporary lens. These texts often exhibit a heightened, meta-theatrical awareness of traditional codes and conventions, this is often utilised to poke fun at the musical as a genre. But these performance texts have also been shaped by integration theory, particularly in their construction of the narrative and the placement of song and dance numbers. In the integrated musical, songs and dances that are unimportant to the plot are deemed unnecessary embellishments and usually excised. New musical comedies use this to their advantage, often using self-reflexive humour which pokes fun at the history of the musical genre and its dance. A traditional showstopper still works for an audience if it is framed within a musical comedy context, but the same style of number might seem out of place in a dystopian science fiction piece unless it is there to serve a specific purpose. For this reason, I will be utilising the new musical comedy as a counter to what we might call the modern or contemporary musical drama, and specifically as a point of reference for my own subversion and reframing of traditional show dance elements within my praxis.

**Dance in new musical comedies versus musical dramas**

The way that new musical comedies use dance could be said to be antithetical to my own research. Dance in these texts are most often used to invoke audience nostalgia, creating comedy, pleasure, and entertainment. The choreography in new musical comedies draws on broader cultural and historic understandings of dance within the musical, peppering their routines with visual
references and in-jokes which evoke the work of other influential or well-known choreographers and show dance styles. As the audience works to connect the dots between visual (and sometimes aural) cues they will ideally derive pleasure and enjoyment from having their expectations fulfilled or be happily surprised by an unexpected but humorous subversion. The use of a specific choreographic convention like a kick line or even a specific dance style might be one way of fulfilling expectations, while a conflicting combination of visual and/or aural signifiers might subvert them to comedic and pleasurable effect. The tap-dancing grannies in ‘Along Came Bialy’ or the frumpy showgirl in ‘I Wanna Be A Producer’ from The Producers might be considered visual signifiers, while the disconnect between the lyrics and the choreography for ‘Show Off’ in The Drowsy Chaperone rely on a combination of visual and aural signifiers. This is a complex and sophisticated form of codification which supports the argument that new musical comedies are often deeply metatheatrical, and that the self-reflexive nature of the musical genre can be utilised as a powerful tool for meaning making.

One example is the use of traditional show dance convention within an incongruous historical setting. Many new musical comedies are set in reasonably contemporary times where the use of show dance might still be considered period appropriate. But for Spamalot!, Aladdin and Something Rotten! which are set in medieval England, the fictional middle eastern nation of Agrabah, and Renaissance England respectively, the use of traditional show dance styles and conventions still ‘works’ and can indeed be used to create great pleasure for audiences despite being historically and stylistically anachronistic. Consider the most recent of these, Something Rotten! a musical that almost totally forgoes the use of period appropriate court or folk dances in favour of easily recognisable musical theatre dance conventions. Nicholaw’s choreography makes almost constant reference to traditional forms of show dance through conventions such as the use of show girl imagery, simple but evocative props, as well as more specific conventions like kick lines, precision dance, Broadway tap, and the eponymous Act one showstopper.

Showstoppers can be found in most, if not all musical comedies. Aladdin, Spamalot! and Something Rotten! all employ a tap-heavy, spectacle-led showstopper towards the mid-end of their first act – ‘Knights of the Round Table’,

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‘Friend Like Me’, and ‘A Musical’, respectively. These large-scale ensemble numbers were historically used as a form of visual spectacle, and to give a kinaesthetic boost to the action. In Chapter Three I discussed the placement of the showstopper within the new musical comedy, identifying the most common place as being towards the end of the first act, just when the engagement of the audience might be starting to wane. But the provision of spectacle and energy are not the only functions that these numbers perform, they also provide entertainment – and often comedy. ‘Knights of the Round Table’ and ‘Friend Like Me’ both have their share of comedic moments, however I would argue that ‘A Musical’ is so saturated with aural and visual references that even the most discerning audience members have struggled to decode the sheer number of in-jokes it contains. Several attempts have been made to analyse this number, including the annotations on the lyrics website Genius.com (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2015), the article Diving into ‘A Musical’ (Skao, 2015) which indicated that at least 41% of the song comprises of references to classic show tunes, and a video analysis titled The Secrets of ‘Something Rotten’s’ Biggest Number (The Wall Street Journal, 2015).

Most of the comedy in this number comes from soothsayer Nostradamus trying to explain musical theatre conventions to the sceptical Nick Bottom, including this hilariously scathing indictment on the functions of show dance:

NICK: Does it advance the plot?

NOSTRADAMUS: No.

NICK: Advance character?

NOSTRADAMUS: Not necessarily!

NICK: Then why do it?

NOSTRADAMUS: Because, it’s entertaining!

(Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2015)

This exchange precedes a lengthy dance break which serves to bring on the remaining ensemble members. The number culminates in a veritable avalanche of references to other musicals, including the use of a variety of instantly recognisable props, further highlighted using musical leitmotifs from well-known shows. These props range from the generic to the specific and include ostrich feather fans, as well as sailor hats and scrubbing brushes that are reminiscent of
classic musical properties like *On The Town*, *South Pacific*, and *Annie*. Towards the end of the number, Nicholaw’s use of a precision kick line is foreshadowed in the lyrics, with members of the ensemble punctuating the words “kick” and “unison” with high kicks (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2015). Then, as Nostradamus sings “In one big wonderful line” the music swells and the ensemble fan out into a kick line that stretches across the stage (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2015). The satisfaction of this ‘big finish’ includes a final visual gag involving Renaissance portraits in a spoof of the actors presenting their headshots at the end of ‘I Hope I Get It’ from *A Chorus Line*.

The effect of this number was so impactful on audiences that it consistently received standing ovations mid-act both on Broadway and in regional tours. The cheerful disdain shown here for the artistic credibility of show dance is supported by the “flashy style” and “big fake smiles” (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2015) of the chorus members, playing up the stereotype of show dance as a form of ornamentation, spectacle, and self-reflexive comedy. This is bolstered not only by the way that number is framed within the show, but also the wider framing of *Something Rotten!* as a musical comedy through its marketing. The jokes made here are so effective because of the audience’s pre-existing understanding of musical theatre conventions – particularly the use of dance. Ergo, the use of show dance as a comedic, entertaining device is readily accepted by audiences because they already understand the ‘traditional’ conventions and codes of the musical and are therefore expecting them.

The functions of show dance in new musical comedies – particularly in anachronistic historical settings – is an area that requires further attention than I can give it here. I include it in my analysis at this point in my argument because it provides an excellent illustration of how contemporary choreographic practitioners can utilise the reflexive nature of the musical genre to create comedic and pleasurable effects through the medium of dance. As already indicated, my own praxis was concerned with the idea of taking traditional show dance conventions including elements of style and function, and then deliberately subverting them in order to create feelings of discomfort or alienation. This was inspired by my engagement with a variety of musical theatre texts, and the desire to interrogate the use of show dance to explore dramatic themes. In the following sections I will be providing critical analysis of the major performance texts which
inspired my own praxis, providing evidence that works to support my hypothesis that the presence of dramatic or disruptive dance works within the musical in part because audiences expect show dance to be pleasurable and entertaining, not discomforting.

The subversion of these expectations by reframing traditional show dance practices within a dramatic musical has the capacity to create a distancing or alienation effect not dissimilar to Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt. Deliberately highlighting the performative aspect of musical theatre can also be used as a powerful dramatic tool, drawing audience attention to themes of artifice and performativity. This was central to the creation of the choreography for 2084, and indeed to the development of the entire creative work. Ultimately, my choreography would be used to explore the use of disruptive or subversive dance through the exploration of themes of subjugation, surveillance and control, and the loss of autonomy, memory and choice. These themes were more broadly represented by a consideration of performativity and masks (both literal and metaphorical), and how the performative nature of dance might be used to show conflict in a variety of ways. I will be expanding upon these themes further in my analysis of 2084 below but first I will be analysing some of the performance texts and choreographic practices that inspired my praxis.

**Inspiration for 2084**

*Violence & Disruption in Show Dance*

During my doctoral candidature my engagement with this field has involved seeing a wide array of live musical texts. As my theoretical and historical research began to guide me away from integration and instead towards theories of disruption, I recalled examples of other instances of disrupted (or disruptive) dance that had been particularly affecting for me as an audience member. This included dance that used violent imagery, that disrupted or subverted audience expectations, and that questioned the objectification of the ensemble. I have already discussed some historical examples in earlier chapters, but below I will be focussing on the work of three contemporary choreographers whose work specifically informed my praxis – John O’Connell, Peter Darling, and Steven Hoggett.
Six months prior to my candidature I was lucky enough to be in Melbourne during the original run of Global Creatures’ musical version of *King Kong*. I say lucky because although my personal response to this show was not entirely positive, elements of John O’Connell’s choreography provided an integral cornerstone of my own research. As an audience member, my personal response to *King Kong* was that it was a visually spectacular show that was sorely lacking in narrative and aesthetic cohesion, that it relied too greatly on the spectacle created by the Kong puppet, and that it suffered from a stilted book, overwrought lighting design, and a score which veered wildly between the contemporary to the historical with little consistency. The choreography from John O’Connell showed a high degree of technical prowess but my overall impression was that it relied too heavily on spectacle with little substance. The number ‘Special FX’ which I have already discussed briefly was one of numerous departures from period appropriate attire, music, and dance that contributed to an often-bizarre lack of cohesion within the show. However, there was one notable exception which piqued my interest. Towards the end of the second act, after Kong has escaped from his bonds and is terrorising the people of New York, a set of curtains close and an ‘in one’ routine set to Arlen and Koehler’s 1930s standard ‘Get Happy’ is performed.

The framing of this number suggests that it is being performed in a revue style show in one of New York’s many theatres. Although it begins as a purely comedic piece, the dramatic tonal shift that occurs partway through was an incredibly arresting piece of theatre. At first the chorus girls come stumbling on stage pell-mell over the cheerful strains of the music. Many of them are late, cannot find their position, or are so flustered that they cannot pick up where they are up to in the routine. At this point during the performance I viewed, the live audience indicated their amusement at the struggle of these chorus girls and the way it was humorously disrupting what otherwise might have been a polished routine.\(^{85}\) Then came the slow and subtle build of tension, articulated through the layering of ‘Get Happy’ with a soundscape of destruction and ominous underscoring. During this build up, the dancing girls grew more flustered and concerned as these sounds grow louder and more frequent. The lights flickered,

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\(^{85}\) The deliberate mistakes of the dancers also called to my mind the rehearsal of ‘One’ in *A Chorus Line*, where the characters verbalise counts, steps, and technical corrections as they practice.
the girls stumbled as the ground shook beneath them, and finally the music and soundscape built to a dramatic crescendo as the curtain behind them lifted to show the destruction wrought by Kong.

I find it difficult to describe the exact impact of this scene on me as an audience member, but the disruption of a perfectly charming song and dance routine by Kong’s wanton destruction struck me in much the same way that ‘Dancin’ on the Sidewalk’ in Fame had over a decade earlier. Within my traditional research, I have encountered at least some discussion from scholars on the absence, disruption or subversion of song to create dramatic effect. As I have already discussed, McMillin calls them turning points and cites Anita’s rape in West Side Story as well as ‘Rose’s Turn’ in Gypsy. Comparatively, there has been little written about dance in the same way, perhaps because dance is not often disrupted in this way. Although it might seem odd to base my praxis around a single number from a musical that I had been quite critical of as an audience member, I was fascinated by the framing of ‘Get Happy’ in King Kong as a comedic song and dance routine that was then subverted to create a dramatic effect. Ultimately, this number would serve not only as a cornerstone for my own praxis, but also as the inspiration for the opening number of 2084. The subversion of a camp, comedic dance sequence, which ultimately created tension and discomfort and not pleasure, served to highlight my interest in show dance that subverted audience expectations to dramatic effect. It also made me consider the effect of a dancing character who is suddenly unable to dance due to emotional or physical inhibitions. This would become integral within the world of 2084 where the characters are under constant scrutiny from the One World Corporation, and particularly in earlier drafts where I focused more closely on the possible ramifications of the mind-wipe technology and how this might affect muscle memory.

Approximately eighteen months later, and close to a year into my candidature, I travelled with co-collaborator and fellow PhD researcher Sarah

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86 I would suggest that the failed reprise of ‘Somewhere’ between Tony and Maria at the end of West Side Story might be another example.

87 In the developmental stages Sarah and I had numerous discussions about whether the erasure of memories and the possible interpolation of new ones might affect the ability of these characters to move and dance. This concept was ultimately not explored as deeply as we had hoped within 2084, however considerations of this kind would be an inevitable part of any further iterations of the show.
Courtis to London and New York. Whilst in London we saw four shows\textsuperscript{88} including \textit{Billy Elliot}, choreographed by Peter Darling. There has already been wonderful analysis of this show exploring how representations of masculinity, class, and political protest are explicated through dance so I will not be exploring these themes here (Sebesta, 2014), (Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016). However, \textit{Billy Elliot} also deals in themes of self-repression, and of being oppressed by others, both of which are also explored in \textit{2084}. From a more aesthetic perspective, Darling’s ramshackle ballet lessons were at least partly my choreographic inspiration for ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’, and the aggressive choreography between the riot police and the miners is not dissimilar to the way that I utilised dance to illustrate the conflict between the One World Chorus\textsuperscript{89} and the Rebel Ensemble\textsuperscript{90}. This was more evident in the workshop version of \textit{2084}, especially ‘Opening Hymn’ which saw the OWC forming a picket line which the Rebels attempted to scale. There is a direct visual link in my choreography here and Darling’s choreography for ‘Solidarity’ from \textit{Billy Elliot}. This link becomes less clear in the final creative artefact, when ‘Opening Hymn’ instead becomes ‘The Celebration’ and the straight line became a protective circle instead. There are also comparisons to be drawn between ‘Swan Lake’ where Billy dances with his future self, and the numbers in \textit{2084} which evoke Julia’s memories of herself and the other characters. This includes ‘One World’, ‘See Me’ and ‘I Remember’.

From London our travels took us to New York, where we engaged with another musical choreographed by Peter Darling, \textit{Matilda}; and Sting’s \textit{The Last Ship} which would introduce me to the work of Steven Hoggett. At this early stage \textit{2084} was still very much at the conceptual stage, and the performance texts we included on our itinerary were chosen so that we might cover a broad spectrum of musical sub-genres\textsuperscript{91}. The creative use of set and props in \textit{Matilda} within the choreography was something I would ultimately explore in my own praxis\textsuperscript{92}, and the use of excess to provide humour in many of the shows we observed would work to broaden my understanding of how I might be able to subvert the framing

\textsuperscript{88} During this research trip we also saw productions of \textit{War Horse} (2007), \textit{Shakespeare in Love} (2014), and the London revival of \textit{Miss Saigon} (2013).
\textsuperscript{89} Hereafter abbreviated as OWC.
\textsuperscript{90} Hereafter abbreviated as either Rebels, or RE.
\textsuperscript{91} We rounded out our itinerary with the operetta style \textit{A Gentlemen’s Guide To Love And Murder} (2013), the revival of rock musical \textit{Hedwig and the Angry Inch} (2014), and jukebox musical \textit{Beautiful: the Carole King Musical} (2014).
\textsuperscript{92} See ‘The Plan’, ‘Tick Tock’.
of these conventions to create dramatic rather than comedic effect. I was also intrigued by the contextual similarities between *Billy Elliot* and *The Last Ship*, not just in setting and theme, but in their use of dance to illustrate community, masculinity, and violence.

In *Billy Elliot*, Darling contrasts Billy’s ballet training with masculine movements inspired by folk dancing traditions from England and Russia:

> “In England, we have Morris dance,” he said, which allows men to “dance with bells on their ankles, and wave handkerchiefs. And Russian folk dance is totally acceptable (for men).” His strategy was to contrast the folk-influenced choreography “with movement that seemed somehow unacceptable — which, for boys, is ballet.”

(Wilson, 2011)

Hoggett’s work on *The Last Ship* also draws on folk dancing traditions and everyday movements, perhaps most notably in ‘The Night The Pugilist Finally Learned How To Dance’, a touching scene between father and son where ballroom dancing is blended with elements of boxing. The exploration of realistic narratives, settings, and characters in both shows carries across into the choreography, which is deeply rooted in their cultural and geographical context. The movement is also very particular to the characters, many of whom are middle-aged and working class. *Billy Elliot* and *The Last Ship* illustrate that an ensemble of blue-collar workers need not come across as out of place or disruptive if naturalistic dance styles rooted in history and tradition are used for realistic characters instead of concert and show dance.

Millie Taylor suggests that, “the assumption of a realistic approach to narrative or to character portrayal encourages the audience to an empathetic reading of narrative and character” (Taylor, 2012, p. 115). For Hoggett, a physical theatre practitioner who has been described as the “anti-dance choreographer” (Gold, Steven Hoggett is the anti-dance choreographer, 2012), his work does not emulate any specific movement style but rather attempts to blur the line between everyday movement, staged movement, and choreographed dance. It has been suggested that this type of movement might represent an example of truly integrated dance, “dance that is so integrated into the fabric of a show that one way or another, it disappears from view” (Gold, On Broadway: Disappearing Act, 2012). The overall effect of the choreography in *The Last Ship* is remarkably
subtle and naturalistic, creating a sense of realism and cohesion even when contrasting movement styles are being used. From an audience perspective, the dance numbers in *The Last Ship* often seemed to roll across the stage like a wave, building slowly until suddenly the whole ensemble would be moving with no way of pinpointing exactly when the shift between staged movement and dance had occurred.

This cohesive, through-choreographed effect that blurs the line between staged movement and dance is a hallmark of Hoggett’s musical theatre work. Not only does it give a greater sense of realism to the characters, but the rare moments of choreographic unison are just as thrilling as a chorus of showgirls performing a precision number. In *Once*, another musical he has worked on, the movement emerges quietly from the characters everyday movements in a way not dissimilar to *The Last Ship*. While the shift between stage movement and dance is smoothed over almost to the point of being through-choreographed, there is still space between the book scenes and the songs, a space that creates the tension between book and lyric time, as explored in McMillin’s theory of doubled time. *American Idiot* is a different beast: both through-composed and through-choreographed, it forgoes book scenes in favour of communicating the story through the between songs and movement. While the shift from number to number is smooth, often blending one into another, the dance is often violent. The characters in *American Idiot* are both young and disenfranchised, and their movements are accordingly rough and frenetic with Hoggett drawing heavily on punk inspired movement vocabularies like moshing and slam dancing. This is not to say that the choreography is one note. Hoggett covers a wide range of emotions being felt by the young protagonists by working deliberately with contrasts, from idling gentleness to explosive rage. These juxtapositions are highlighted by the music, which, though rarely soft or gentle, still allows for light and shade in the movement. This is enhanced by the amount of bodies onstage at any given time, with fast-paced ensemble pieces giving the show its energy and lift; while the more emotional numbers tend to be more static, highlighting smaller groups and individual performances.

Another identifiable aspect of Hoggett’s choreography is that it often exudes a masculine and sometimes sexual energy. The choreography for *The Last Ship* and *American Idiot* is typified by strong, hard hitting movements with
the former being more grounded and the latter more athletic and elevated. *Once*, which deals with themes of longing and loneliness is much less energetic, and much of its visual power comes from the use of stillness or slow movements, juxtaposed with more precise, sharp gestures\(^\text{93}\).

Part of the success of *Once* is that it came the year after all the bombast and spectacle of *Spider-Man*. This is how culture works, how popular taste works. Once you’ve had the excess of something like that, maybe what you want next is something lo-fi and small, very human and quiet and emotional. In a couple of years, we might want something explosive again.

(Hoggett, 2013)

The use of juxtaposition and contrast as implemented by Hoggett is a powerful tool within show dance. It can be found in the difference between stillness and movement, tension and release, and perhaps even movements that are smooth and soft versus those which are more violent and harsh. Juxtaposition is also important when we consider the role of dance and the way that it might work with or against other elements of the production especially the music, and visual design elements like costume, lighting, and set. In Hoggett’s work, something like *American Idiot* uses the movement in conjunction with projection, video and strobe lighting to aid in creating a frenetic energy across the visual elements of the production, whereas something like *Once* illustrates a ‘less is more’ approach.

Other elements of Hoggett’s practice that inspired me included his use of abstract and minimalist movement, particularly in *Once* which is part of my inspiration for the staging of ‘No More Wars’, ‘Spiders (Contraband)’, and ‘In Your Eyes’ in 2084. An understanding of his choreographic practices was also vital to my own praxis, including his casting of non-dancing actors, the use of a flexible workshopping process, and the incorporation of the individual performers’ talents. Time limitations would ultimately lead to a much shorter period of workshopping than I would have liked, however I was conscious of being flexible in my collaboration with my performers during both the workshop and the finished product of 2084, in both instances working with a group of dedicated amateurs with vastly different levels of dance training. Although I did not draw on specific forms of social or folk dancing as Hoggett often does, I did look at movement

\(^{93}\) Like the bank tellers in ‘Say It To Me Now’. 

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styles external to concert and show dance styles including ritualistic circle dances and military drills. Also, rather than attempting to achieve the type of cohesive elegance that typifies much of Hoggett’s work, I instead set out to explore what the effect might be if I disrupted the unity of the dance at key dramatic points. This included highlighting the discomfort of the Rebels as they assimilated into the OWC, best exemplified in ‘The Burning’ and ‘Big Brother is Watching You’.

These were some of the primary musical texts and choreographers that would go on to inform early concepts of what would become 2084. In the year between this and the next research trip we made to New York, Sarah and I developed some of our initial story concepts into a draft libretto containing seven numbers. As my traditional research saw me move away from integration and instead towards theories taken from McMillin and Taylor, I had discussed with Sarah in some depth about the idea of disrupting or entirely halting dance and the effect this might create within the story we were beginning to structure. A mutual creative decision was made early on in our collaboration to subvert a variety of conventions within our creative artefact. Our hope was that the elements of the choreography which subverted audience expectations would be understood better if there were other small insurrections present across multiple levels of the production, specifically through the subversion of familiar tropes relating to plot, narrative, and character. Further subversions that we had not planned for would also develop organically throughout our creative process, including our introduction of Nick’s music, our choices regarding casting and the aesthetic of the show, as well as through subsequent script developments and rewrites.

Early Choreographic Concepts for 2084: A Musical

The initial choreographic concepts that I developed for 2084 came from a broader series of brainstorming sessions that I undertook, both by myself as well as with my co-collaborator, lyricist and librettist Sarah Courtis. We already had a history of creative collaboration dating back to 2011, particularly through our Honours studies when we co-wrote and performed a cabaret style bricolage musical. The benefits of combining our respective areas of study along with our mutually similar aesthetic sensibilities seemed obvious, not least of all because
the multi-disciplinary nature of musical theatre lent itself well to a collaboration of this kind. Our initial discussions took place over the latter half of 2014 and early 2015, and the original concept that would eventually become 2084 stemmed from a random late-night experience I had when I was heading home after seeing a theatrical production in Perth City. Waiting at a bus stop, I saw a plastic bag begin blowing about the abandoned parking lot, almost like it was dancing in the strong breeze. Inspired, I quickly jotted down some notes and took it to the first meeting that Sarah and I had about our creative praxis.

The concept of a where a character performed and interacted with a plastic bag was the first choreographic concept that I pitched to Sarah at this meeting, the notes of which are contained in one of several handwritten notebooks that contain elements of my early creative process. This chance moment of choreographic inspiration ultimately led us into a variety of discussions. This included the types of themes and characters we might like to explore, as well as the theories and methods that we wanted to use as guiding frameworks for both our respective and communal praxis. At this early stage I had been considering working with Mueller’s principles of integration as my guiding frame, but I very quickly moved beyond this when it became clear that the scholarship in this area had advanced well beyond integration. As my reading continued to expand within the area, I soon discovered the work of both McMillin and Taylor, and their theorisation of the potentially disruptive nature of the musical. I was already fascinated with the relationship between disruption and show dance, and these theoretical frames would ultimately provide a guide for my own praxis.

At the earliest stages of development, the plot of 2084 emerged as a reasonably simple backstage musical. An ex-performer is asked to step in as associate choreographer on a show which then loses its funding, and then the cast and crew band together to get the financial backing to complete the performances. Through the play-within-a-play convention (or perhaps more aptly, a musical within a musical) we were keen to explore the meta-theatrical and self-reflexive nature of the musical genre. We were also hoping to destabilise our

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94 My creative process was documented across several different notebooks, as well as a digital document which details the choreography and movement direction that I contributed to 2084. Due to a combination of their fragmented nature, the illegibility of my handwriting, and the monumental task of digitising and organising so much data, I have not transcribed these sources in full. Instead, I have done my best to summarise and present the content from these sources that is most pertinent to my research journey.
audiences’ expectations, framing traditional conventions in subversive ways to create a work that honoured the history of the musical but also experimented with the form in such a way that it would constitute a new contribution to existing knowledge within the field. Even this early in our creative collaboration Sarah and I shared a desire to move away from traditional, romance-led musicals and instead towards something which dealt with themes and characters that resonated more deeply with us as creative practitioners. My earliest handwritten notes indicate three different character archetypes and several key themes that we were hoping to explore. “The director/choreographer”, “the dancer”, and “the diva soprano” character archetypes would eventually go on to become the characters of Roberta, Julia, and Felicity respectively. The primary theme we were hoping to engage with was the idea of performance and performativity, including the use of masks both metaphorical and literal. These themes would prove vital to the completed creative artefact, especially for my own praxis which relied on the inherently performative nature of the musical genre to create meaning through the choreography and staged movement.

Initially we discussed these themes, character archetypes, and the backstage musical narrative in collaborative meetings. Over the course of several months of individual and collaborative brainstorming and writing, a narrative began to evolve, and the first basic plot structure for our creative artefact is included below. Taken from my notes, the narrative here is not divided by scene, but instead if defined through the major song and dance numbers. Each number is defined in part by the conceptual and aesthetic choices that were inspiring and informing our creative choices, both individually and as collaborators at this time, as well as later observations that I made when writing this chapter.

Initial Draft Structure (2014)

1. Opening – I imagined this number as the finale to a traditional Cole Porter or Rodgers and Hammerstein style song and dance musical – perhaps a new musical comedy which was having its final performance. My staging concept was for this number to be performed upstage to an imaginary audience, a state that would be intimated using sound and lighting. Partway through the number however, the performers would reverse their pattering, the lighting
would change, and they would entertain the ‘real’ audience. This opening number would have been followed by a scene where ‘the dancer’ (who has been watching the show from the audience) chats to ‘the director-choreographer’ who tries to convince them to come back to performing as part of their next upcoming project. Although I ultimately did not use the flip in audience perspective, several elements of this concept can still be found in 2084’s opening number ‘One World’. This includes the presence of traditional show dance, and a character who is observing the performance along with the audience.

2. Plastic Bag Dance – here ‘the dancer’ begins to rediscover their love of dance in an ordinary place. The backstory for this character was that they had left the theatre behind, perhaps due to injury or personal circumstance, but were secretly yearning to return. This number was meant to play out in much the same way that my own real-life experience with the plastic bag had. The idea of an ex-dancer performing with a dirty old plastic bag was both sad and comedic, and the image I had of the choreography in my mind would ideally mix their uncertainty with moments of unadulterated joy. This concept would eventually become Julia’s solo with the flyer, ‘I Remember pre-prise 1’, where she rediscovers her love of movement despite the memory wipe technology.

3. Injury Song – Inspired by numbers like ‘My Psychopharmacologist And I’ from Next To Normal (2008) and ‘One’ from A Chorus Line. I imagined this number as an almost recitative, whispered song that explored the very real ramifications of the physical strain that are put on the human body when performing. Any dancer will be familiar with the experience of smiling through the pain of an injury and attempting to make a performance look effortless and fun. In Forbidden Broadway’s parody of ‘Steam Heat’ they explore the comic side of dance related injuries, this number would have aimed to subvert that comedy to create a more dramatic or tragic effect. This concept would go on
to inspire the performance of both ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’ in the finished artefact.

4. Diva Meltdown – ‘The diva soprano’ was a secondary character who we wanted to have ongoing personal and professional issues with ‘the dancer’ character. Based at least in part on Dorothy Brock from 42nd Street and Carlotta from The Phantom of the Opera, this character was conceived as a performer who had also come back to the stage after an absence. This number would have involved a diva meltdown of epic proportions, but one that would ultimately lead to some level of understanding and catharsis between the two characters. This concept was more fully realised in the number ‘Something About You’ but it was ultimately cut from the final iteration of 2084 due to a combination of factors.

5. The “I Quit” Song – Ideally this number would have taken place at the end of act one with one of the leads ready to walk out on the production and being convinced by ‘the diva’ and ‘the dancer’ to stay. Having just reconciled the differences between the warring cast and crew, the production then gets word that they have just lost their major financial backer and the show is going to be shut down. This would have provided the cliff-hanger ending to the first half, leading into a potential second act.

While the second half of the plot was far less defined than the beginning, there were still three major concepts that we wanted to explore through song and dance. They are as follows:

6. The Producer Song – ‘The director/choreographer’, ‘the dancer’, and ‘the diva’ band together to try and convince the producer to reinstate their backing. When the producer refuses, they decide to find a new means of putting on their show. While there was a show-within-a-show in 2084, the central conflict became more about the interpersonal relationships between the characters. This is partially because as the plot developed and we introduced our source text Nineteen Eighty-Four, the stakes suddenly became much higher for our characters. Losing funding
for a show might create a degree of dramatic tension, but with our characters living in a totalitarian dictatorship it made more sense to see them in more dangerous life or death situations.

7. Dream Sequences/Flashback Dance – Choreographically I envisioned this number as being akin to Cassie’s solo ‘Music and the Mirror’ from A Chorus Line with the music evoking the feel of ‘Being Alive’ from Company. It would have explored the dancer character’s rise and fall from student, to performer, to nobody. The idea was to strip them down until they were ‘naked’, dressed only in a skin coloured unitard, and surrounded by all the people who doubted them, only to rise triumphantly at the end. Although this concept was one that was ultimately not used, the use of flashbacks through dance was a convention that was utilised several times throughout 2084; most notably to explore the backstory of Julia.

8. Finale – Having secured funding for their show (through a plot device we never quite got around to deciding), this number would have mirrored the opening almost identically, except this time it would be the opening of the new show and not the closing. The cyclical nature of the plot is more fully realised within 2084, which ends as it segues into the beginning of Orwell’s novel.

As already mentioned, many of these initial concepts would go on to inform the workshop version of 2084, as well as the final creative artefact. As Sarah began her work on the book and lyrics for a proposed workshop script she re-read George Orwell’s seminal science fiction novel Nineteen Eighty-Four. Struck by the themes of memory, loss and autonomy, Sarah suggested Orwell’s novel as a basis for our own creative work. By contextualising our characters’ struggles to create a musical performance within a dystopian setting, the argument was that this would not only raise the narrative stakes for our character, it would also create a much more interesting world for them to inhabit and would likely provide new avenues for our respective research in both the academic and practical spheres. We also chose Nineteen Eighty-Four because of its ongoing relevance in the global and political climate in which we were developing the script. At the time of our initial workshop for 2084, Australia was still almost two years away from the legalisation of same sex marriage, and the United States was
unknowingly heading towards the successful election of Donald Trump. As Sarah and I developed the script, we began to explore wider themes that were affecting the world around us, including the rights of minority groups, surveillance, individual autonomy, defunding of the arts, and the control and censorship of the media – all themes that were deeply personal to both of us, and would ultimately impact on our creative praxis.

Our discussions of science fiction elements and memory in the context of the world we were building also led to the concept of the memory wipe technology. In *The Matrix* (1999), speculative technology had made it possible to ‘upload’ physical abilities into a digital avatar and I was intrigued by the idea of exploring how rewriting or destroying someone’s memories might influence their physical abilities in a real world capacity. Would a trained performer who had their memories wiped still be able to instinctively sing and dance? Conversely, would the insertion or ‘uploading’ of these skills into a character subconscious then allow them to perform that skill in the real world, and would recipients have an increased risk of injury due to their physical limitations? This led to a whole host of questions regarding the ethical implications of the memory wipe technology, and the suppression or censoring of history to create a docile population. It also related to my own research in ways I had not previously considered, namely the fact that show dance was passed down through physical action for so many years and has only begun to be preserved relatively recently. While the link between the memory wipe technology and song and dance was implied in *2084*, this is an aspect of the production that I would be keen to explore in more depth in any subsequent adaptions, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

**2084 Workshop (August 2015)**

In between drafts, Sarah and I continued brainstorming and discussing the evolving script. Once we had ethics clearance in place for a workshop of a partial script, we began working remotely with professional composer Nick Choo to create the music for us. Nick was chosen not only because of his reputation as an award winning professional musical theatre composer in Malaysia, but also because of our previous success in creative collaborations. His unique composition style also lent itself to our respective research with his penchant for
tricky melodies, shifting time signatures, along with the fact that he was happy to 
his music to Sarah’s lyrics made him an obvious choice to compose the music for 
2084. The music for 2084 often had a sense of quiet discord to it, an aspect that 
suited our respective praxis greatly. It also allowed for some complex rhythms in 
the choreography, with the movements continuously having to adapt to the 
shifting or syncopated rhythms of Nick’s compositions.

Four days were allocated for intensive workshopping of the songs, scenes, 
and book scenes we had written, as well as the choreography and staged 
movement I had prepared. These sessions would be interspersed with video 
interviews with the performers regarding the process, the script, and the songs 
and dances. The fifth day was reserved for a final rehearsal followed by an 
informal viewing and a question and answer session by a small group of friends, 
family, and local arts practitioners. My role within the workshop was to serve not 
only as choreographer, but also as co-director alongside Sarah. I would continue 
this role in the final production of 2084, allowing me to ensure the staged 
movement and the physical characterisation aligned with my choreographic 
vision. Essentially, all movement that coincided with music in this production 
were choreographed and directed by me. Some elements of staged movement not set 
to music were also directed or co-directed by myself, however as they are not the 
focus of my research, I will not be going into great detail about them within my 
analysis.

While it was Sarah who made the ultimate decision as to which numbers 
would be included in this workshop, she consistently maintained an open 
dialogue with me to ensure that I would have plenty of opportunity within the 
workshop script to explore my choreographic ideas. The workshop of 2084 was 
ultimately conducted with a small group of performers over the course of a week 
and was invaluable both for the exploration and development of my earliest 
choreographic concepts, as well as the feedback and data that we gathered from 
our workshop participants and our audience members. The data collected from 
the workshop was instrumental in the ongoing development of 2084 and the 
presentation of the final creative artefact almost a year later. This process would 
also reveal some of the ongoing challenges we would face, including the 
availability of appropriate rehearsal spaces, and the collaborative relationship I 
specifically had with composer Nick Choo. While the former was merely a failure
on the behalf of the University to adequately understand our requirements, the latter proved to be a great hindrance for my research, and an example of a collaborative relationship between composer and choreographer that was never entirely realised.

The music that Nick composed, both for the workshop and the completed artefact almost a year later was exciting, dynamic and dramatic, with complex, quick changing time signatures that were challenging and exciting to choreograph to. Unfortunately, he did not meet the deadlines we had set for him to send the completed demos to us so that I could complete my choreography in a timely fashion before the workshop. Normally, my choreographic process would involve going over my initial choreographic concepts while listening to the music first as a whole and then in sections as needed. This would then be followed by further scaffolding of steps and patterning, before physically testing out the movements to the music so ensure it would be functional and executable for performers. The final part of my process would have involved further development as required, and adding in further details including the focus of the performers gaze, and other directorial elements that would assist in them mastering the attitude, feeling, or style of the steps.

Unfortunately, as the final songs were completed only days before the workshop was due to begin, making it almost impossible for me to lay down the kind of choreographic detail I would have preferred. This was particularly challenging when I had such a short space of time to teach the choreography in, to performers who had little to no movement training, and in an environment that was not suited to dance rehearsals. Although I had beautiful music to work with, there was also a lack of flexibility due to Nick’s tendency to orchestrate as he composes. This would remain an issue for me throughout the creative process, with Nick’s creative practice often resulting in music that either didn’t meet or completely disregarded my requests as a choreographer. The lack of creative and artistic collaboration between us, compounded by the short timeframe in which we were working in was a source of great anxiety for me. When the resulting orchestrations did not match with the choreographic concepts and notes I had provided, I had to either adapt my choreography or make judicious choices about what I wanted changed.
In hindsight, I feel that many of the adjustments that I made due to Nick’s inflexibility may have ended up enhancing the overall show, however as a collaborator I felt that our relationship was not only less well defined than the one I had with Sarah, but also that it may have ultimately stifled some of my creative output. Despite my best efforts, there was little time to fully realise my choreographic concepts for the workshop to the level that I had hoped before the workshop began. Instead I worked using a combination of partially realised choreographic concepts, a smattering of steps that were at various stages of development which I then adapted to the performers in rehearsal, and a mostly realised series of patterning which allowed me to at least position the performers where I wanted them, even if the linking steps to move them required further work. Another difficulty was the amount of content we had to cover. Even with four full days of rehearsal time we struggled to cover all seven numbers in enough depth. While this was due in part to a lack of performer experience and their inability to pick up choreography quickly, the rehearsal venue was also entirely unsuited to the type of work we were attempting to achieve which made teaching choreography particularly difficult. Despite these issues, we forged on and what follows are some of my reflections on the numbers we performed as part of the workshop with an explicit focus on my choreography. I have also included the questions that we used as our guide for the participant interviews, and a reflection on some of the changes that were made in the final creative work due to the workshop. I have not included the entire workshop script as the changes made to the libretto and lyrics between the workshop and the final creative artefact were primarily to do with the structure and plot, and ultimately had little to no bearing on the execution of individual choreographic concepts.

1. Opening Number

This number would eventually become ‘Prologue’, the second number in 2084. In the workshop, it was merely an introduction to the world of 2084, starting with the Voice of Orwell and the entry of the OWC. The straight lines and marching present in the workshop choreography were made more complex for the final performance, but ultimately there were few large amendments made:
• In the workshop choreography the ensemble entered from both sides of the stage, met in the middle and then moved forward in straight lines. In the final choreography they unfolded into diagonal lines instead, giving a sense of opening or broadening the narrow but deep performance space of the Nexus stage. This also worked to create better sight lines for the audience to see the performers.
• In the segment where the leads sing their solo lines, they stepped forward in order to draw the audience’s attention to who was speaking and then fell back into ranks. In the finished production they remained stationary and were instead emphasised by the lighting.
• The One World salute used in the completed production was present in the workshop choreography for this number, though it did undergo a certain amount of development.
• The concept of these characters’ bodies being under control was also present, with one of the stage directions for this number being: “the ensemble flinch in their bodies but not in their faces” (Courtis & Sears, 2015).

2. Opening Hymn

This number would be renamed ‘The Celebration’ in the final iteration of the creative artefact. This number introduced the antagonistic relationship between the Rebels and the OWC, with the Rebels identified by their red armbands.95

• The title of this number inspired me to use battery operated candles as props for the OWC. The visual symbolism of the candles evoked connotations of religious ceremonies, as well as memorial services. This seemed particularly fitting considering the cult of personality surrounding the Voice of Orwell, and the literal commemoration of the memory wipes

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95 Here the employment of simple cloth armbands were a simple means of differentiating between these two groups. As our cast was small and many of them played multiple roles, the bands needed to be easy to take on and off to facilitate their change in role. In the final version of 2084 this concept was much more fully realised through the work of props master Dean Lovatt who created personalised arm bands for each cast member. They glowed blue to indicate the OWC, flashed for the Rebels who had disrupted their programming (the flashes grew faster when the memory wipes were badly damaged), and were ultimately turned off when any of the characters died.
within this scene. The candles were ultimately removed from the choreography for the final artefact, making way for greater complexity of hand movements and removing extraneous properties from this scene.

- In my annotations on the 2084 script I discussed the use of protective circles, instead of the straight lines present in the workshop choreography. Here, the Rebels attempted to break through a straight picket line, throwing themselves directly towards the audience.

- In the workshop, the moment where the Rebel is dragged off to have their memory wiped elicited nervous laughter rather than horror from our audience. This response was a large part of the reason why we chose to stop the music for that scene – we wanted this scene to be confronting and horrifying, not played for laughs.

- The OWC rushing forward before the verse starting “every day we watch the news” remained virtually unchanged in the final production. The choreography which followed retained the heavy footwork from the workshop, but the actual steps were reworked quite thoroughly.

- The gestures associated with “strength”, “peace”, “slavery” and “god” – all phrases taken directly from Nineteen Eighty-Four – remained virtually unchanged from workshop to the completed artefact.

- The scene that followed this number involved Roberta and Jade (Julia). In the completed artefact it would be moved to much later in the narrative, as would the song ‘No More Wars’. This was part of a larger structural reshuffle that occurred in subsequent rewrites on the script, and the extending of the narrative from a short one act musical to a longer format with two acts.

3. No More Wars

As mentioned above, this number would eventually be shifted much later in the first act, taking place after ‘The Burning’ – which in the workshop script was the final number before the cliff-hanger ending. The character of Julia (‘the dancer’) was at this point still separate from Roberta’s daughter Jade, but the conflation of these two characters was one of the first changes that was suggested during this process.
Although the workshop script called for Jade to be dancing with one of the abandoned candles in the darkness, we were short on time to workshop this number, and the other numbers were already very dance heavy. In addition, the cast and creative team all agreed with my assertion that Roberta watching her daughter dance seemed derivative and more than a bit ridiculous. Rather than detracting from Roberta’s singing, the decision was made to cut the choreography. In the final version of 2084, I returned to this number with a different concept, closer to stage movement that dance choreography, but still choreographed to the music.

4. The Plan

The choreography for this number remained remarkably unchanged from the original choreographic concepts that I explored in the workshop to the actual performances of 2084. The visual gag of Jade (later merged with Julia) always being late and getting in trouble was present in this workshop iteration, as were the computer keyboards.

- In addition to the rhythmic, percussive typing on the keyboards which was first developed in the workshop, the completed number also incorporated headphones and did away with the messy notepads and pens.
- Julia was originally in charge of the worker ensemble here, leading them in their work as well as their stretching routines.
- The workshop version of this number was the most complex, choreographically, and it took a very long time to teach it as the performers were still learning the rhythm of the music.
- After the workshop I asked Nick to reorchestrate the music to make it sound heavier and more machine like, along with an extended introduction which allowed for the scene change.
- The elements of surveillance in the finished choreography, where the ensemble characters lean in and eavesdrop on the conversations of the lead characters, were present here but developed further for the final production. Ultimately, it was played more for comedy rather than creepiness as it was in the workshop.
5. Love Song for Ian

The suggested stage directions for this song in the workshop included notes which would ultimately be used in choreography for ‘The Plan’ instead. This included the mandatory stretching session led by Julia as part of company policy to reduce muscle strain on their workers, as well as the presence of the Rebels who are part of the working ensemble and hiding in plain sight. Once I received the music for ‘The Plan’ and ‘Love Song for Ian’ I quickly realised that the vast amount of my choreographic concepts would have to become part of the former, while the latter would constitute a short scene transition. The deliberate lack of movement with the ensemble exiting in slow motion meant that the focus would be on Will who was singing, and Ian who was the subject of the song.

6. Dreams That Can’t Be Mine

In the workshop, this song was a vehicle for the characters of Ian and Felicity – not Ian and Roberta. In subsequent restructures of the script, this song was moved to follow on from ‘Prologue’ and ‘The Celebration’ (listed here still as ‘Opening Number’ and ‘Opening Hymn’ respectively). This was one of the few songs that I went into the workshops with no clear picture about what I wanted from the movement, perhaps because it was such an emotional and character driven song that I never really felt that it needed a dance component. In the final iteration of 2084 this number had no choreography, the focus instead being on the words and emotions of the characters, highlighting their isolation, their loneliness, and their inability to express themselves.

7. What Do You Want? / The Burning

These two numbers were conflated together in the workshop in order to keep the amount of songs to our limit of seven. However, it was very clear to us that they were two very distinct but linked numbers. The workshop script listed them as songs 7a and 7b respectively, but in the finished script they would become more clearly delineated by separating them into two entirely separate song and dance numbers.
7a. *What Do You Want?*

The first song where we see the perspective of the Rebels, the choreography for the workshop was very dance heavy. Sadly, the footwork alone was far too complex for the performers who had limited dance training and even more limited time to learn the steps. As a result, it became necessary during the workshop for me to simplify some of the more ambitious steps, a collaborative act that better prepared me for re-crafting the choreography for this number for the final version of *2084*.

- Because this song was among the last that our workshop participants learned, their timing was far too quick during the introduction where the Rebels rush on to rescue their fellow who had been wiped in ‘Opening Hymn’. This would be rectified in the finished product with plenty of rehearsal time dedicated to getting that scene right.
- Because the OWC were not originally onstage prior to this number the Rebels originally directed this song to the audience. The breaking of the fourth wall here, with the Rebels interacting with the audience was also found in the picket line protest in ‘Opening Hymn’. This is something that I feel could have been quite effective if incorporated into the final performance and is one of the elements that I would love to revisit in any future iterations.
- The main dance segment where the Rebels entreat the OWC to listen to them was meant to be very mechanical with the Rebels physically manipulating the OWC as though they were puppets. The partner work was quite choreographically complex and was one of the numbers that we worked on the most during the workshop process. Here the Rebels are far more aggressive to their OWC partners who are blank, their bodies like pliable canvasses. The choreography at times was almost more like a proper fist fight before the Rebels eventually relent and help the OWC members to their feet. This is a vast contrast to the final script where the Rebels are outnumbered, trying desperately to reason with the OWC who are refusing to listen. The Rebels are much less hands on, and in fact the OWC appears to have the upper hand for much of the choreography.

96 See Act 1 Scene 5 of the annotated script.
Despite the differences in the build-up, the outcome of the number still sees both groups as equally oppressed and hurting because of the corporation’s influence.

- The chaos of the ending, the blending of the Rebels and the OWC, and the full body spasms and anxious breathing did not change much from its conception in the workshop to the final performances. Rather than freezing in place and spiralling away from each other backwards while staring at their wipe bands, the final choreography involved dramatic forward lunges. This was partially a safety concern due to the performance taking place on a very small stage, and because it looked more dramatic and aesthetically pleasing to have the ensemble performing the lunges rather than falling backwards.

7b. The Burning

Whether or not I was able to explore my choreographic concepts for ‘The Burning’ were very dependent on whether I had enough time to teach the steps for the other numbers in the limited time frame that we had. Sadly, my plan to workshop the movements with the performers based on the basic framework I had drawn up did not come to fruition. Regardless, as the workshop rehearsals progressed, I began to glean a clearer picture of what I wanted this number to look like, based around the idea of the ensemble creating a pile of chairs, boxes, and books and watching it go up in flames. Although I did not get to workshop this number as I had hoped, having the music for this number finalised so early meant that I was able to dedicate a lot of time to developing the choreography around the fire for the full version of 2084.

- The scaffolding I created for the workshop choreography was divided into three segments – ignition, build, and climax:
  1) Ignition. Only four bars long, this segment coincided with the beginning of the instrumental in ‘The Burning’ and involved the lighting of the fire. Although we could not use any lighting effects for the workshop, the ensemble intimated the eruption of heat and flame by leaping back from the bonfire they had created, simultaneously becoming
hypnotised by the dancing flames even as they moved away to avoid being burned.

2) **Build.** The next eight bars involved building the flames, using more books and boxes to create a larger pile.

3) **Climax.** The final section also comprised of eight bars, leading to a rising crescendo in the music where the ensemble race around the edges of the bonfire until Julia rushes forward to snatch up a book.

- This was the same basic structure I would go on to utilise for my choreography for the final iteration of ‘The Burning’ which appears in the video recording of 2084. Incidentally, I was so inspired by Nick Choo’s music and the tiny amount of physical workshopping we did for this number in the workshop that I decided to develop this number specifically so that I could use the choreography as part of the dance audition. Doubtless this is part of the reason that the choreography is so strong in this number, despite the lack of professional polish I would have liked to achieve in the final performance.

- Despite being underdeveloped at the workshop stage, the cliff-hanger ending that we left the narrative on (Julia stealing the book from the bonfire) left both the performers and our audience members wanting to know more. Both Sarah and I were greatly enthused by both the positive and the constructively critical feedback that we received during this process, and it would serve us well moving forward into the next phase of our creative praxis.

Ultimately the workshop process gave me a much-needed opportunity to begin exploring Nick Choo’s beautifully rendered music and gave me a much better idea of how I would need to expand my choreographic concepts for a much longer show than any of us had originally anticipated. In addition, Sarah and I took the opportunity during the workshop to collect voluntary data from our performers using live video interviews, as well as informal verbal feedback from our audience members. As the script was still very much in development at this stage, we asked questions related specifically to the development of the narrative, the choreography, and the music of 2084. These questions were designed to open a dialogue regarding our respective work thus far, and if
necessary, to lead the way to further lines of enquiry. Our initial questions included the following:

- Does the plot make sense to you?
- Are the characters growing naturally?
- Are you effected by the lyrics? If so, how?
- Are you effected by the music? If so, how?
- What story is being told through the dance?
- How is character conveyed through the dance?
- How important is the balance between song and dance to you as a performer?
- How clearly is the story being conveyed by the lyrics?
- What layers of meaning can be interpreted through the linguistic choices of the lyrics?
- What other thoughts do you have about this script?
- What other thoughts do you have about this process?
- How can you see this script being developed for further audiences?

The feedback we received was primarily positive, with much of the constructive criticism covering issues that we had already identified either in the lead up to the workshop or during the week. Among the most common of these were structural considerations, including the combining of Jade and Julia into one character, a decision that would condense the number of lead characters, make the narrative tighter and the casting process much simpler. The workshop also provided us with an opportunity to discuss the orders of the song and how they worked to with the narrative. As mentioned above, 'No More Wars' was ultimately moved after 'The Burning', and 'Dreams That Can't Be Mine' was moved much earlier with the character Felicity being swapped out for Roberta. The finished script would also see a much earlier introduction to specific characters, helping to flesh out the characters of Julia and Felicity, as well as giving more context to the relationships between Julia and Felicity, Julia and Ian, and Ian and Will.

Over the year between the workshop and the final performances of 2084, Sarah worked on re-developing the script and Nick Choo composed the remaining songs, the three of us working collaboratively (with only some artistic differences) in order to help bring our final conceptual vision of 2084 to life. The original draft structure of 2084 and the resulting workshop contained many elements that would carry over into the finished product. This included the framing of the action through a backstage musical, the theme of performativity, and the
use of specific character archetypes. The ‘director/choreographer’, ‘dancer’, and ‘diva soprano’ archetypes from our initial drafts became the characters of Roberta, Julia, and Felicity respectively for the workshop, and these female roles would be supported and mirrored by the introduction of the three male leads (Ian, Will, and the Assistant), and the androgynous and omniscient Voice of Orwell. Many of my earliest choreographic ideas would also appear in the completed show, though in many cases they changed dramatically in form, structure and style. The staging and framing of the opening number would go through numerous changes, but the use of traditional show dance stayed. My earliest choreographic concept of a soloist dancing with a plastic bag would become ‘I Remember Pre-prise’, and another song and dance sequence, which dealt with the physical and mental wellbeing of the ensemble, ended up inspiring three separate numbers at the end of act one: ‘Rehearsals’, ‘Control’, and ‘Something About You’97. A planned dream ballet which focussed on the back-story of the ‘dancer’ character never quite eventuated in the way I had envisioned, but dance was ultimately used in several flashback sequences including in ‘One World’, ‘See Me’, and ‘I Remember’.

Camp, science fiction musicals, dystopian themes in a utopian form

In the wake of the workshop, my traditional research and praxis continued to inform each other. As my historical and theoretical research broadened into new areas, I became specifically interested in the use of camp as a musical theatre convention, particularly its relationship to dance. It was here that I made the link between the use of camp in both political and science fiction musicals – usually in order to deal with complex or difficult themes. In addition, I found Richard Dyer’s discussion of the musical as a utopian form of entertainment was a fascinating counterpoint to the dystopic world that Sarah and I were building together. There were numerous times during our development of the script where we asked ourselves how exactly we might use the musical to explore the type of themes that we were interested in.

97 Although cut from the final staged version, a recorded version of the song was included on the soundtrack. This number is discussed further in the annotated script in the Appendices.
The answer came, in part, from Millie Taylor. Specifically, from her suggestion that the value of using the musical as a form to explore difficult themes lies in its familiarity to audiences:

The greater the disjunction between the popular or comic aspects of the work and its serious intent, the more extreme is the range of emotions generated for and in the audience, and the more telling is the political effect.

(Gordon, Jubin, & Taylor, 2016, p. 91)

While the use of camp within the musical has historically been utilised as a comedic device, this is far from its only application. When I discussed Sontag earlier, I highlighted some of the themes that camp is most often used to represent. Most notably this includes themes of gender and sexuality, but realistically it could be almost anything that is presented in an exaggerated fashion. Science fiction musicals often explore issues relating to topics as varied as gender and sexuality, body horror and ethics, and the effects of dystopian societies on individual autonomy. But while these texts speak to contemporary anxieties and socio-political issues, there are remarkably few, if any, straight dramatic science fiction musicals98. In contrast, there are plenty of dramatic musical texts that deal with uncomfortable or political themes through the lens of song and dance. Many of these musicals emerged during the 1960s and dealt with contemporary issues through a historic lens, juxtaposing their use of camp song and dance against dramatic themes to great effect99.

An excellent example is Cabaret (1966) which is set in Weimar era Germany during the rise of Nazism. In Stanley Green’s assessment of the original production, he suggests that despite the “desperate gaiety” of the opening number, it is inferred from the offset that the musical that follows will not be an escapist fantasy (Green, 1984, pp. 332-333). This is compounded by the set, consisting primarily of a giant distorted mirror that was tilted towards the audience, creating a literal mirroring effect and inviting them to reflect on their relationship to the work (Green, 1984, p. 332). By the end of the musical the Nazis have taken power and the characters are about to be plunged into a devastating

98 One of the most recent dramatic science fiction musicals is the ill-fated Spider-man: Turn Off the Dark (2010) which is better known for its status as a financial flop than as a science fiction text.
99 See my discussion of concept musicals in Chapter Three for more examples.
The titular song is framed not as a triumphant torch song, but as the desperate cry of a woman who has endured both an abortion and a broken heart and now must weather the coming storm alone (Kenrick, 2008, p. 312). The opening and closing numbers of 2084 are similarly bleak, with the show beginning with the disruption of a performance by a terrorist attack, and ending with the lead characters either dead or memory wiped, and the population uniting in hatred as the narrative dovetails into the beginning of Orwell’s novel.

If we compare the use of camp song and dance in Cabaret to most popular or well-known science fiction musicals, the framing is not entirely dissimilar. Yet, science fiction musicals seem to almost universally be aligned with musical comedies rather than musical dramas. This is particularly true of earlier science fiction musicals like The Rocky Horror Show (1973) and Little Shop of Horrors (1982) both of which explore themes of sexuality and the demise of the American dream through the camp excesses of the musical. The energetic pelvic thrusting of the Transylvanians in the ‘Time Warp’ and Frank N’ Furter’s sensuous, camp theatrics are juxtaposed here against some of the more disturbing plot points. Not only does he seduce Brad, Janet, and the hapless Rocky, he also murders Eddy in a violent jealous rage. The camp ridiculousness of these scenes, played for melodrama, and in the context of a musical comedy makes Rocky Horror much more palatable for an audience. The same can be said of Little Shop which deals with themes of family, spousal abuse, and poverty through a catchy doo-wop inspired score and a plot ripped straight from a science fiction B-movie. While this is a story filled with villains, from Audrey’s abusive boyfriend Orin, to the calculating Mr. Mushnik who essentially gaslights the orphaned Seymour into continuing to work for him by offering to adopt him, it is the affable Seymour who ends up literally murdering his way to success. The ending sees him doom the planet by propagating cuttings from the giant carnivorous alien plant Audrey II. This is an objectively tragic narrative for all involved, but the use of camp song and dance, the melodramatic style, and the trope filled narrative aligns it once again with the musical comedy and not drama.

While themes of sexuality, class, and poverty remain topical for the musical genre, science fiction musicals are now largely concerned with exploring dystopian narratives and themes of personal autonomy. We see this trend perhaps most clearly in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks in America with
the productions Urinetown (2001), Repo! The Genetic Opera (2002), and We Will Rock You (2002), all of which utilise camp in various capacities. Perhaps most interestingly, this time period also corresponds to the beginning of a growing interest from scholars in how audiences read musical texts – particularly their use of conventions aligned with pleasure and entertainment to explore uncomfortable themes. In Repo, the excesses of camp are used to explore the extreme gore and body horror of a dystopian future where a surgery addicted population have their organs violently repossessed if they can’t make their repayments. Once again, the narrative of this text is objectively horrifying, but the use of camp, melodrama, and low budget special effects combine to make it far more palatable for an audience.

A much more complex text in its utilisation of camp, Urinetown is a savagely funny show that deals with serious contemporary socio-political issues regarding overpopulation and dwindling resources through the lens of traditional musical comedy conventions (Miller S., 2007, p. 218). Written partially in response to Thomas Robert Malthus’ essay on the Principles of Population (1798), on the surface Urinetown could be read merely as a funny little show about peeing. But its use of Brechtian conventions makes it much more subversive in its goals than a traditional, or even a new musical comedy. As Anne Beggs suggests:

_Urinetown_’s real subversive potential lies not in its obvious critique of capitalism, but in its paradoxical refusal to carry immanent musical conventions through to their anticipated conclusion: the songs are tuneful and the love story is touching, but they do not solve manmade environmental crises or their concomitant political exploitation

(Beggs, 2010, p. 55)

In the case of Urinetown, the subversive nature of the camp goes above and beyond reflexivity and instead into what historian Scott Miller calls a form of double satire. This is a text that laughs not only at the more ridiculous conventions of the musical comedy, but also pokes fun at other texts like The Threepenny Opera that have worked to reject these conventions: “the Ultimate Self-Referential Postmodern Musical” (Miller, 2007, p. 219). Beggs’ discussion of Urinetown makes explicit the multiple references the score makes to Broadway classics like Carousel, Guys and Dolls, Hello Dolly, and West Side Story, as well
as allusions to the work of choreographers like Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse (Beggs, 2010, p. 45). This includes the original choreography for ‘Snuff That Girl’, a jazzy number that draws deliberate parallels to ‘Cool’ from West Side Story in its dramatization of conflict (Beggs, 2010, p. 45). While the plot centres around a dystopic future where all toilets have been privatised due to water shortages, a concept made all the funnier by the scatological humour and the ridiculously camp explorations of very serious ecological themes. The camp derives not only from the use of recognisable tropes and pun-in-cheek characters, but also from the grim setting which they are juxtaposed against.

Each of the science fiction musicals I have discussed above can be read either as camp, or as utilising camp to explore uncomfortable themes. By doing so, these texts have the potential to be both entertaining and evocative, inviting an audience to find pleasure in their camp humour and excess, but similarly to explore some of humanities darker tendencies. This view is corroborated by Richard Dyer who posits that all musicals have the capacity to present “complex or unpleasant feelings […] in a way that makes them seem uncomplicated, direct and vivid” (Dyer, 1985, p. 226). This is not to say that using song and dance to explore uncomfortable themes in a way that is still entertaining and pleasurable is specific to science fiction musicals. However, I would suggest that the conflation of science fiction musicals with camp excess is so common that it would likely be considered unusual for a text within this genre to not utilise camp in some capacity.

This alignment of the science fiction musical with camp is particularly interesting considering Richard Dyer’s discussion of entertainment, and the musical as a utopian genre:

Entertainment does not […] present models of utopian worlds, as in the classic utopias of Sir Thomas More, William Morris, et al. Rather the utopianism is contained in the feelings it embodies. It presents, head-on as it were, what utopia would feel like.

(Dyer, 1985, p. 222)

Dyer goes on to suggest that “the construction of a utopia relates to specific inadequacies in society” (Dyer, 1985, p. 227). Is it any wonder then that he considers the musical to be a utopian form, historically and aesthetically aligned
as it is with popular entertainment, with escapism, and a certain degree of wish
fulfilment? The subversion of social tensions, inadequacies, and actions onstage
through the implementation of utopian ideals can be found in the often ‘unrealistic’
conventions of the musical comedy – namely the use of non-diegetic song and
dance but also the historic and ongoing use of camp.

As the script for 2084 continued to develop between the workshop and the
final production, I began questioning the merits of using a utopian form to tell a
dystopian narrative. One of my goals was to see if I could utilise dance within the
context of a serious, dramatic science fiction musical. Specifically, I wanted to
subvert audience expectations by disrupting the familiar. For my own research
this meant deepening my understanding of how science fiction musicals dealt
with dystopian themes through dance, and particularly how it might be used to
illustrate themes of control, subjugation, and memory. Would audiences be able
to successfully ‘read’ the goals of my choreography? Or would the disruption I
was hoping to create be too far removed from the familiar and merely confuse
and alienate them? In order to better ascertain how I might achieve my goals I
decided at this juncture to analyse the differences between how dystopias have
been presented on the legitimate and the musical stage. In order to explore these
differences I chose to analyse the popular jukebox musical We Will Rock You
(2002), a show which touched on many of the same themes we were looking at
in 2084. I then compared the techniques and conventions used to present the
same themes in We Will Rock You with a staged version of 1984 (2013).

Described as “a utopian story set in a dystopian world” (Taylor, 2012, p.
162), I would suggest that We Will Rock You an ultimately enjoyable text where
the audience derives pleasure from the use of well-known tropes, plot devices,
and character archetypes, as well as the nostalgic score which is drawn from the
discography of British rock group Queen. Rather than growing despondent in the
face of a dystopian future where all media is controlled by a major corporation,
We Will Rock You is an entertaining and pleasurable performance text which
shows an archetypal triumph of good over evil and of freedom and self-
expression over corporate greed. As a straight dramatic play, 1984 differs vastly
in tone and performance style from the camp nostalgia and utopian sense of
community created by We Will Rock You. A brutal exploration of Orwell’s novel,
with torture scenes deemed so graphic that the Broadway run of the play imposed
an age restriction (McPhee, 2017). Yet the content and themes of these two performance texts are remarkably similar.

According to Mahida, dystopian works tend to have a series of characteristic elements or conventions that can be identified (Mahida, 2011). This usually includes a society where some disaster has led to dramatic social changes, and often sees a hierarchical society or caste system being preserved by the implementation of propaganda and education systems, as well as the use of symbols or figureheads and the threat of surveillance by the ruling agency. These elements are often tied into the development or use of advanced technologies which are utilised by the ruling elite and provides a reason for the rebellion of the protagonists. Usually this involves some form of protest regarding the suppression of individual autonomy, and a lack of belief in the society. The similarities between We Will Rock You and 1984 align with many of these elements, both are set in futuristic dystopias where the characters are subjugated by a totalitarian system (Globalsoft/The Party); the population is kept under tight control through the regulation of media, as well as the cult of personality surrounding the figureheads of the governing bodies (Killer Queen/Big Brother); and both texts also focus on similar themes including the suppression of individual autonomy.

Since its premiere on the West End there has been some analysis of We Will Rock You, but little that focusses specifically on Arlene Phillips’ choreography. This may be because of its positioning as a jukebox musical with a trope filled plotline, cartoonish villains, and its reliance on the popularity of Queen’s music to engender commercial success. But We Will Rock You is not only a commercially successful jukebox musical. It is also a performance text where dance is utilised as a world building tool, and more specifically as a means of indicating distinctions between different groups of people and the level to which they are held under the thrall of the Globalsoft corporation. As a dystopian science fiction text presented in what we might consider a utopian performance genre, We Will Rock You is a fascinating study into the role of camp, song, and dance, and my analysis of the choreography opened up new lines of enquiry regarding the use of show dance as a mode of self-expression within the science fiction musical.
At first glance Arlene Phillips’ choreography for *We Will Rock You* seems to deal in simple enough juxtapositions. The robotic, mechanical Ga-Ga Kids are stilted and awkward in their movement vocabulary, rendering them as emotionally and sexually muted. The dance style of the Bohemians is much freer, used to show off their individual personalities as well as their community ties. Their movement is defined by the rock music they perform, and the use of rock star gyrations recall the sexual connotations that go along with it. Interestingly, Killer Queen and her minions are also aligned with the sexual and the sensual, albeit in a more sophisticated way than the Bohemians. The stylised and highly polished choreography in ‘Killer Queen’ uses precise steps and careful manipulation of prop canes: a symbol of old-world glamour and class, but also a phallic symbol of masculine power reminiscent of police batons. While Killer Queen’s position affords her a modicum of sexual power, it is the Bohemians who ultimately triumph by rejecting the puritanical reign of Globalsoft and allowing humanity to express themselves freely again.

Something that I found particularly interesting about *We Will Rock You* was the way it staged the torture of political dissidents onstage in comparison to *1984*. When the Bohemians are brain drained during the number ‘The Seven Seas of Rhye’, strobe lighting and loud music works to conceal much of their physical and aural distress. The character of Khasoggi (much like Killer Queen) is also framed as little more than a cackling pantomime villain, and the tension of this objectively horrifying scene culminates in the damaged Bohemians singing merrily as they depart (Elton, 2002). The way that *We Will Rock You* deals with the stripping of these characters autonomy is through the comfortable excesses of musical theatre – namely camp, song and dance. The audience’s attention is also divided across a group of characters which allows for less individual empathy. By comparison, the torture scenes in *1984* are similarly excessive, but in a way that is unflinchingly brutal. Here our focus is solely on Winston, and there is no softening the brutality bestowed upon him. As mentioned earlier, these sequences are quite graphic in nature. The visceral image of Winston spitting out a mouthful of bloodied teeth is made even more horrifying through live video projections, allowing the audience an uncomfortably close view despite the physical distance that is created between the performer and the audience by the existence of the fourth wall.
Considering the intertextual links between these two performances and the obvious parallels between them, it made a great deal of sense to consider the ways in which they dealt with similar themes and narrative elements, and the differences in their execution through two different performance mediums. The development of *2084* would be strongly guided by my consideration of genre, particularly how dance might be used to discomfort and alienate as well as to create moments of pleasure and entertainment. Earlier I quoted Chandler and Elam, who both suggested that challenging too many elements of a genre can be dangerous and might threaten the integrity of the resulting text. During my praxis, I relied on my own knowledge as an audience member and scholar to help inform my decisions, working under a series of assumptions about how familiar my own audience might be with musical theatre, science fiction texts, and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. My hypothesis was that I could use the audience’s expectations of what a musical inspired by Orwell’s work might be like to my advantage as a choreographer, taking inspiration from Phillips, but moving away from the use of camp and comedy to soften the darker themes we were exploring. Instead, I attempted to frame the use of camp and performativity as a negative theme, discombobulating the audience and subverting their expectations of the functions that my choreography might perform. This included the use of dance to show the subjugation and control of the characters, instead of as a symbol of hope and self-expression.

The only character able to freely exhibit their individual autonomy through dance in *2084* is Julia, but her brief solo at the end of ‘I Remember Pre-prise’ does not foreshadow the eventual freedom of the community she represents as it might in a performance text like *We Will Rock You*. Instead, she is reassimilated back into the corporation, once more a nameless faceless drone as she was in ‘One World’. Another element of Phillips’ work that can be seen to have inspired the choreography for *2084* is the juxtaposition in movement vocabularies between the Ga-Ga Kids and the Bohemians; evident in my own juxtaposition between the OWC and Rebels. ‘The Seven Seas of Rhye’ also formed part of the inspiration for the memory wipe technology, as well as for the choreography in

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100 Audience feedback surveys confirmed this.
'The Plan', which sees office drones mechanically going about various administrative and filing tasks\textsuperscript{101}.

\textit{The subversion of audience expectations, chorus as character/object}

After the initial workshop of \textit{2084} was completed, and during the ongoing development of the full-length script, Sarah and I would once again travel to New York for field research purposes. Whilst there we attended panels and workshops with key practitioners working in the field at the first ever \textit{BroadwayCon}, and we were also able to engage with a diverse range of new musical theatre works, chosen in part out of personal curiosity as well as for their potential relevance to our respective research\textsuperscript{102}. My analysis of new musical comedies which begins this chapter emerged from my critical analytical engagement with \textit{Something Rotten!} this research trip; the choreography and set for \textit{Spring Awakening} served as further inspiration for the final look and feel of \textit{2084}; and the presence of queer characters in both \textit{Spring Awakening} and \textit{Fun Home} bolstered our resolve in choosing to have Ian and Will as the primary romantic pairing. As we moved into the final months of developing the script and I began to lay out the scaffolding for the remaining choreography \textit{2084}, I found myself drawing on elements that I had found particularly effective or moving in Andrew Palermo’s choreography for \textit{Allegiance}, and Andy Blankenbuehler’s work on \textit{Hamilton}. I have articulated some of my responses to these shows below with a focus on the specific elements which inspired my choreography, namely the subversion of audience expectations of dance and movement to create dramatic effects, and the depersonalisation and objectification of the ensemble.

The juxtaposition between movement and stillness was one that I was already cognisant of as a choreographic practitioner, as well as through my ongoing scholarly research. But during this phase of my praxis I became much more cognisant of the power that the disruption of movement might create\textsuperscript{103}. I

\textsuperscript{101} There are other visual call-backs within this number to the choreography from several other musical texts which I discuss in my annotated copy of the script. This can be found in the Appendices.


\textsuperscript{103} This includes Steven Hoggett’s choreography which I have already discussed above, and Millie Taylor’s discussion of loss and excess which I outlined in Chapter Four.
had already decided that I did not want to use the excesses of show dance to either soften or satirize the darker themes in 2084 as in We Will Rock You or Urinetown. Instead I wanted to push back at audience expectations, using the tension between the dystopian elements of the book and the use of traditional show dance in order to specifically discomfort and discombobulate. My desire to achieve this had already been informed by my engagement with other performance texts like King Kong, which had yielded an exciting and unexpected dramatic effect in its framing of ‘Get Happy’. However, it was the use of juxtaposition between movement and stillness in Allegiance that created the most visceral effect for me as an audience member and solidified my choreographic aspirations.

The plot of Allegiance is based in part on the real-life experiences of performer George Takei, one of many Japanese Americans who were placed in internment camps in the United States during World War Two. The dance in Allegiance performs several functions. Firstly, it illustrates the friction between Japanese and American culture. While there is a traditional Bon Odori dance, the choreography is largely dominated by 1940s style Western swing dancing, including the energetic ‘Get In The Game’ where many of the moves are modelled after American baseball. Andrew Palermo also employed dance as a means of breaking down the dramatic tension within the setting of the camp, as well as a means of physically dramatising the horror of warfare104.

Because of the often-grim source material, choreographer Andrew Palermo was very conscious of how he utilised dance:

A choreographer’s job is to be “sensitive and appropriate” to the subject matter at hand, “For Allegiance,” Palermo says, “I didn’t want to shoehorn in big, splashy dance numbers if it didn’t make sense.”

(Gold, Even Dark Stories Need Dance, 2015)

As an audience member, one of the most affecting uses of movement for me was the shift between the bleak stillness of ‘Itetsuita’ and the joyous energy of ‘Victory Swing’ in the second act. These numbers work to illustrate the surrender of Japan

104 In this context it is interesting to consider Allegiance in relation to Pacific Overtures (2004) which also dealt with themes of war, and Japanese/American relations through dance. For further analysis see: (McMillin, 2006, pp. 202-207).
following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombings are dramatized to devastating effect in ‘Itetsuita’, with the Japanese American ensemble members present but motionless onstage. In the final moments of this number as the ensemble sings and an American radio broadcast relays the news of the bombings, the soundscape incorporates a deep ominous rumbling, compounded with dark, dappled lighting. The scene then culminated in a projection of a bird’s eye view of an explosive cloud moving outwards and obliterating everything in its path.

My expectation as an audience member watching this scene in performance for the first time was that this number would be followed by sombre book scene, perhaps featuring the reaction of the lead characters. Instead, there was an abrupt shift in mood conveyed through a combination of lighting, music, and movement. As the opening bars of ‘Victory Swing’ begins, three American GI’s swagger in, singing about America’s victory in delightful three-part harmony. A large banner reading ‘Victory!’ is projected, along with fireworks and American flags. Towards the end of this song, the Japanese American ensemble members return slowly to the stage, their faces expressing the same emotions currently felt by the audience – a mixture of shock, disbelief, and deep discomfort.

It is perhaps worth noting here that these numbers come towards the end of the second act, and that there has already been a series of increasingly tragic events that have unfolded onstage, including the raw grief of the residents of the internment camp at the funeral of an infant child, as well as several harrowing movement sequences where Japanese American soldiers engage in combat for a country that has incarcerated their family and friends. Yet it is the abrupt tonal shift between ‘Itetsuita’ and ‘Victory Swing’ that elicited the greatest response from the audience, with audience members weeping audibly around me during both numbers. The disruption of my expectations as an audience member through such a simple juxtaposition was astonishingly effective. In a different context ‘Victory Swing’ might have been a celebratory song and dance number, but instead it is presented as a bitterly painful indictment of dominant historical ideologies, and the treatment of Japanese American citizens during this time.

The scope and horror of the bombings as presented in ‘Itetsuita’ creates a visceral, emotional response that is then enhanced once again by the content of ‘Victory Swing’. The juxtaposition of these two numbers create a similar effect to
'Get Happy' in *King Kong*, involving a shift from camp to seriousness that subverts audience expectations. Where ‘Get Happy’ relies on the choreography being disrupted to create this, ‘Victory Swing’ uses the *advent* of movement to disrupt the tension of the previous number, discombobulating the audience’s expectations and creating a discomforting and alienating effect. I lay these two examples side by side in order to illustrate how the choreography for ‘One World’ in *2084* was directly inspired by the idea of juxtaposing the camp excess of show dance with the disruption or loss of it, and how the subversion of audience expectations might be used to create dramatic effect in the context of a serious narrative. The forced complicity of the Japanese American characters in ‘Victory Swing’ is also akin to how dance is used as a means of illustrating the subjugation, assimilation, and control of the characters in *2084*.¹⁰⁵

These themes were also enhanced by a consideration of the chorus as a character, and specifically the depersonalisation and objectification of individuals into a communal whole. The depersonalisation of the chorus can be observed in some of the earliest musical comedies where dance-directors cast almost identical chorines in order to create a uniform look, as well as in ‘A Chorus Line’ when the characters willingly suppress their individualism in order to create the necessary visual cohesion for the chorus line (Symonds & Taylor, 2014). There are also examples where the chorus have been depersonalised through choreography that deals with the mundane aspects of repetitive work. This includes ‘Dancing On A Typewriter’ from the musical film *Ready, Willing and Able* (1937), a number which precedes both ‘I Wanna Be A Producer’ from *The Producers* (2001) and ‘The Plan’ from *2084*. While my own praxis was informed by each of these historical examples, I was most inspired by the work of choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler in *Hamilton*.

As a show which is not only sung-through, but through-choreographed, *Hamilton* has an almost cinematic feel. The movement, music and lyrics propel the story along at an often dizzying, breakneck pace. This is achieved in part by having an ensemble where each member as the capacity to break out into a series of individualised characters, or to be enveloped into the larger group. This type of casting is reminiscent of the work of choreographers like Robert Alton,

Agnes de Mille, and Bob Fosse, all of whom pushed for chorus members who could create more individualised characters. In the case of Hamilton, this is achieved to great effect by creating a chorus that is not defined by gender. Male and female performers step in to take on small roles as soldiers, servants and civilians, manipulating set pieces, props, and even the flow of time. This allows the story to be propelled along quickly, but also allows breathing space at key moments in the narrative.

One of the best examples of this is the role of The Bullet, originated by Ariana de Bose. This performer embodies the bullet which will eventually kill Alexander, providing consistent visual foreshadowing throughout the production (Corde, 2016). I explored a similar concept in 2084, introducing a chorus member in ‘One World’ who embodied a deadly piece of shrapnel who would later return in a variety of guises, including as a member of the Rebel Ensemble, the representation of Julia as a young child in ‘I Remember’, and as one of the masked performers who defuse the Assistant’s bomber vest during ‘In Your Eyes’.

My fascination with The Bullet also led to my own exploration of how the depersonalisation and objectification of the chorus might shape the audience’s empathetic responses to the characters within the world of 2084. Bethany Hughes suggests that the chorus is “a distinct character, a manifestation of community, a connecting force between audience and story” (Hughes, 2014, p. 263). However, I hypothesised that the function or role of the ensemble need not be to create connection; it could also be used as a divisive force. This is primarily how I utilised the ensemble in 2084, not only as a means of illustrating the conflict between the Rebels and One World, but also to indicate the ongoing depersonalisation of all these groups. For this reason, I also chose to align moments of choreographic cohesion with the loss of individual autonomy, framing community bonds within the chorus as a negative aspect. This aligns with my overarching goal for the dance within 2084 to function as a means of oppression, rather than self-expression, as well as to explicate the themes of personal autonomy, memory, and choice that would shape the narrative.
Analysis of 2084 – My Choreographic Praxis in Performance

In the preparation of the choreography and the subsequent rehearsals and performances of 2084, my research moved frequently between different elements of both Smith and Dean’s iterative cyclic web and Nelson’s arts praxis model. My pre-existing knowledge of the history, theories, codes and conventions of musical theatre dance saw me devising the choreography for 2084 in much the same way that I had constructed the workshop choreography. This was a form of research-led practice, where my traditional academic and scholarly research in conjunction with my field research informed my creative praxis. In the process of creating and performing in the show I also attained a deeper understanding of the theories and history of the genre through my own practice-based research. The interplay between traditional research and praxis had already proved effective in my workshop process, a form of practice as research, with one of several outcomes of this phase of research resulting in a desire to foster the power of human participant research through the implementation of audience reception theories. My hope was that audience reception would help guide not only my theoretical work, but also to better understand the potential outcomes of my final creative artefact. Finally, my own autoethnographic frame as well as the communal autoethnography that I had engaged in through my continuing work with Sarah would ultimately inform not only the completed creative artefact, but also my critical and analytical responses to the work, some of which are detailed here.

Of all the different modes of research I undertook in the roughly twelve months between completing the workshop and the final production of 2084, it was the second research trip I took to New York with Sarah, combined with my interrogation of Taylor’s Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment, that opened the most exciting lines of enquiry for my research. Engaging with performance texts like Hamilton and Something Rotten! so close together revealed a fascinating contrast between the ways that these two very different musicals were utilising dance to create specific theatrical effects. Indeed, I would suggest the effectiveness of show dance within any given musical theatre production is not limited to audience engagement with that one show. Nor is it

106 In order to fit in as many shows as possible, we often viewed two or more musicals a day during this research trip. In this instance, a matinee of Hamilton before an evening showing of Something Rotten!
created to stand alone, but rather to support and contrast with other elements of a production. As Richard Kislan suggests:

All creative work emerges from a sound tradition. Even the artistic decision to reject the past acknowledges acquaintance with that which is to be rejected.

[...]

Since the language of movement can be universal and timeless, master choreographers absorb the past rather than reject it.

(Kislan, 1987, p. 176)

Taking this into consideration, my goals for the choreography in 2084 which were informed by my role as both a choreographic practitioner and a scholar who was engaging with the theories underpinning these codes and conventions were as follows:

1. To utilise audience expectations about integration and cohesion within the musical in order to highlight elements of the production which were deliberately disruptive and/or disjunctive.

2. To subvert audience expectations about camp, parody, pleasure, and entertainment within a musical theatre setting to create moments of drama, tragedy, and possibly even alienation.

3. To use the performative nature of traditional show dance styles to make the audience more aware of the major themes we were exploring: memory, choice, the loss of autonomy, and the pressures of being under constant surveillance.

In addition, I wanted my choreography to serve specifically as a dramatic rather than comedic convention, and I was especially curious to see how audiences responded to dance that served as a visual metaphor for subjugation, control and a lack of individual autonomy instead of as a means of joyous self-expression. Despite its distinction as a science fiction musical, Sarah and I were adamant that 2084 not be camp or kitschy, but instead be presented as a frighteningly realistic world where the artifice of performance could be shattered
at any time by external forces. As well as the looming threat of surveillance and civil unrest, the struggles of the characters to maintain their private and public selves would be embodied through dance and movement as much as their words. In addition, key moments of disruption within the overall production would ideally be used to shatter the theatrical illusion and see audiences thinking more critically about the ways in which we were engaging with pre-existing themes from *Nineteen Eighty-four*.

In order to support my praxis, and as part of the artistic collaboration between myself and Sarah, all members of the creative team (including composer Nick Choo) were made aware of the research outcomes that we were trying to achieve. This included discussions about ways in which we might be able to subvert codes and conventions across multiple levels of *2084*, not just in the narrative, music, and lyrics, but also in visual elements of set, lighting, costume, and even casting. What will follow is an analysis of specific elements relating to the creative artefact *2084*. This will be explored through some of the wider theoretical lenses discussed in previous chapters, with a specific focus on the audience responses. My analysis of the creative artefact will be informed by a consideration of musical theatre specific theories discussed in Chapter Four, and is best supplemented with the provided video recording of *2084*, and the annotated *2084* script – both of which can be found in the Appendices.

At this juncture I would also like to reiterate the fact that I have written this chapter knowing that regardless of how objective I have tried to be, there will doubtless a degree of personal and academic biases that have informed my analysis. Although I'm certain that my close relationship to the text might be considered repressive and limiting rather than enlightening or progressive, I would suggest that being so intimately acquainted with both the authorial and choreographic intent may in fact provide a new perspective that has not often been seen within the field. This is also a large part of reason why I have utilised the data taken from our anonymous audience feedback surveys as an integral aspect of my analysis of *2084*. The other reason being of course that *2084* was framed in a variety of ways: as a musical, as a science fiction text, and as a transformative work based on a well-known piece of western literature. As a result, most audience members came into the performance space with a certain amount of pre-existing expectations about the show (including the choreography)
whether they were consciously aware of it or not. These are all considerations that shaped the construction of the audience survey, with the questions designed to collect demographic information as well as open ended questions that would hopefully encourage individuals to engage with the elements that they felt most strongly about.

The following analysis of 2084 will focus on the work that I did as a choreographer and, to a lesser extent, as a co-author and co-director of the piece along with Sarah. This will be positioned utilising the theories and frameworks I have engaged with in earlier chapters and will involve discussions of authorial intent, as well as insights gained from the audience response surveys collected during the three-day performance run of 2084 in August of 2016. It will specifically include discussions relating to: structure, narrative and theme; gender, sexuality and race; intertextuality and self-reflexivity; the disruption or subversion of traditional genre conventions including pleasure and entertainment; visual symbolism; audience responses; and a final auto-ethnographical response to the work.

Structure, narrative, and theme

Every one of the guides for writing musicals that I consulted for my literature review urge writers not to limit themselves artistically when it comes to constructing a new original musical. Instead, the suggestion is that those who are writing musicals should allow themselves to be guided by previously successful formulas but also to recognise that a ‘one size fits all’ approach is less likely to yield a musical that audiences will want to see. In this case, the communal autoethnographical approach that was undertaken between myself and fellow researcher Sarah Courtis helped to ensure that any choreographic requirements that were integral to my research could be negotiated within the context of the book and lyrics. Equally, I was more than happy to accommodate specific elements of her research through my choreography when it was necessary.

The placement of the dance numbers in 2084 was in part an organic process, evolving out of ongoing considerations of how each number would function within the context of the overall show. The overarching narrative of 2084 was therefore shaped by a consideration of traditional narrative structures and
conventions but was also guided by our interaction with other musical theatre texts and praxis guides. It also evolved organically out of a consideration of where to place specific choreographic ideas, some of which I have already discussed earlier in this chapter. One of the most important considerations was leaving enough time between large scale ensemble numbers to allow for costume and scenery changes, and to ensure that there was a variety of ensemble, group, and solo song and dance numbers to maintain audience interest. The final song list which can be found in the 2084 script in the Appendices indicates an ensemble heavy opening with three large song and numbers in a row. These are followed by a series of scenes and numbers with only one or two main characters, sometimes supported by unobtrusive choreography from the ensemble as in ‘Spiders (Contraband)’. These scenes allow for some breathing room as we are establishing the setting and characters. However, the latter half of act one contains three more scenes with large scale numbers, namely Scene Four which contains ‘The Plan’, Scene Five which contains three numbers that build up the number of performers onstage ‘What Do You Want?’; ‘The Burning’, and ‘One World Reprise’, and finally Scene Seven which originally contained three major numbers, ‘Rehearsals’, ‘Control’, and ‘Something About You’ which was ultimately cut during the final rehearsal process. The result is a very busy first act which could doubtless benefit from further editing and workshopping. Act Two is not only much shorter, it was also less physically demanding for the performers. The finale ‘Big Brother Is Watching You’ is the only large-scale ensemble number that is particularly strenuous, most other dance numbers either involve fewer cast members or the chorus serve more as set pieces than as characters, as is the case in both ‘Tick Tock’ and ‘In Your Eyes’.

The various roles that the choreography fulfills in 2084 covers many if not all the functions of dance I discussed in Chapter Four. As the opening number ‘One World’ is not only an introduction to the world of 2084, but also to the use of traditional show dance styles which will be utilised throughout. Primarily, I would suggest that most of the dances in 2084 are used to enhance the narrative and provide a degree of entertainment, with the disruptive elements of my choreography providing a means of highlighting the primary themes of memory, choice, and autonomy. There are also times when dance and movement serve a structural role, particularly the use of dance as transition from ‘Memory Matters’
to ‘Tick Tock’, as well as the various fantasy or dream sequences found in Act Two. In terms of the other functions, I would suggest that the creation of mood and atmosphere and the generation of energy are perhaps the two most integral functions of the dance in 2084. This is based in part on the responses from audience surveys, which saw emotions/feelings and mood/atmosphere considered to be the two largest contributions that dance makes to the musical. Similarly, high in importance was the relationship of the dance to the narrative, the lyrics, and the music, as well as the use of visual spectacle which was most apparent in the larger ensemble numbers. While there are certainly elements of ritual and celebration to several of the numbers including ‘Prologue’, ‘The Celebration’, and the two bonfire dances, this was not necessarily an aspect that audiences commented on. Similarly, the expression of character and the invocation of subtext is achieved most crucially in the memory sequences, as well as in Julia’s solo dance number ‘I Remember Pre-prize 1’, however there was little if any discussion from our audience members about how the dance specifically contributed to either the construction or expression of character.

While the plot 2084 could easily fit into Aristotle’s unified model or Gustav Freytag’s pyramid format, the conclusion of 2084 alludes to the fact that it leads into the beginning of Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four. Therefore, there is a cyclical or repetitious element to the narrative. Cyclical narratives and mythic structures have been a typical feature of several of the artistic collaborations I have worked on with Sarah. While it is an artistic choice that is more pertinent to her own research, in this instance it was also complementary to my own research. The symbolic burning of the copy of Nineteen Eighty-Four by the Voice of Orwell at the end of 2084 is evocative not only of book burnings in Nazi Germany, but also the famous epithet; “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (Santanaya, 1905). This takes on a particularly poignant note when you consider the use of memory wipe technology within 2084, and even more if you linger on the destruction of personal relationships between the characters of Roberta and Julia, or Ian and Will.

In fact, memory is one of the most important themes within 2084, along with autonomy and choice. There are also themes of subjugation, control and surveillance to be considered, which link to the wider themes of performativity, artifice, and masks. Memory is the theme which has the most structural clout,
with ‘One World’, ‘See Me’ and ‘I Remember’ serving as flashbacks for Roberta and Julia. These numbers are easily identifiable as memories by their use of the scrim, providing a barrier between the past and the present that is only broken during ‘One World’. This indicates that Roberta’s memories are still intact, unlike Julia’s in ‘See Me’, which are still hazy and newly recovered. The barrier of the scrim in ‘I Remember’ might also symbolise Julia’s distrust of her mother Roberta and the emotional wall that has always stood between them, even before Roberta’s betrayal.

The use of the scrim also differentiates these flashback sequences visually from other numbers that involve a manipulation of the passage of time. This can be observed in the choreography for ‘No More Wars’, where the movement of the ensemble members alternate between regular speed and slow motion in an attempt to create the sensation of time passing in short and long bursts as Roberta walks the streets. This is best exemplified by the sequence where two male ensemble members walk together, but slightly out of sync before pausing and then breaking away from each other. Another example from this number is sequence of movements where members of the Rebels throw projectiles at Roberta’s window. At first their gestures occur almost in slow motion, but after they are alarmed by a nearby sound, they rush to exit before they are caught, returning to usual speed.

The manipulation of time can also be seen during the number ‘In Your Eyes’, a sequence that exists in a suspended moment of time. This number allows Will to reconnect briefly with his lover Ian in a moment of fantasy and wish fulfilment, and the defusing of the bomb in this number provides a choreographic parallel to the explosion in ‘One World’. While this number was heavily inspired by The Bullet from Hamilton, arguably my work is not as cohesive nor elegant as Blankenbuehler’s. ‘In Your Eyes’ serves as a somewhat clumsy attempt at what Hamilton achieved so beautifully in ‘The World Was Wide Enough’. In part this is a result of the vastly uneven dance talent of my cast compounded by the relatively short rehearsal time period and the slow pace at which our composer worked, the experimental nature of the process and my own relative inexperience. My personal feeling is that I could execute this concept far better now in hindsight.

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107 An example perhaps of McMillin’s ‘doubled time’.226
Considerations of gender, sexuality, and race

It has been suggested that as a genre, the musical tends to reinforce dominant cultural ideologies. Dyer suggests: “Class, race and sexual caste are denied validity as problems by the dominant (bourgeois, white, male) ideology of society. We should not expect show business to be markedly different” (Dyer, 1985, p. 228). Although this trend may have been more prevalent when Dyer was writing in the mid-1980s, it doesn’t entirely account for the fact that musical theatre has also historically provided a space where performers, creators, and audiences who exist within the margins of society have found a safe space within which to tell their stories. While many of the musicals currently being produced on the global stage present the same heteronormative and often misogynistic narratives\textsuperscript{108}, there is also a growing awareness of and a push to explore the narratives of marginalised groups. This is leading to the creation of new musicals which challenge the status quo in a variety of ways.

From a scholarly perspective, my literature review indicates an increase in texts which examine musicals from feminist, queer, and racial perspectives over the last fifteen years. In addition, there has been renewed interest in defining and analysing the roles and functions of musical theatre dance. From a more practical perspective, I feel it is worthwhile considering the diversity in the 2015-16 season on Broadway which coincided neatly with our second field research trip to New York. *Waitress* (2016) had the first all-female creative team on Broadway, Deaf West’s Revival of *Spring Awakening* (2015) which had numerous actors with disabilities represented onstage, *Fun Home* (2015) which featured another female led writing team in a story about queer characters, as well as *Allegiance* (2015), *Hamilton* (2016), and *Shuffle Along, or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed* (2016) all of which explored race relations in America through a historical lens. More recently, *The Band’s Visit* (2017) which featured a cast of Arabic characters took out ten Tony Award’s, and just this year Ali Stroker became the first performer in a wheelchair to win best featured actress in a musical for her work on the revival of *Oklahoma!* (2018).

\textsuperscript{108} There was recently a great deal of concern from commentators on the number of musicals being produced on Broadway that had problematic content – mostly regarding their portrayal of women (Paulson, 2018) (Tran, 2018). This included the revivals of *My Fair Lady* and *Carousel* in 2018, and *Kiss Me, Kate* in 2019, as well as a new musical adaptation of the film *Pretty Woman* which premiered on Broadway in 2018.
As a cultural product, musical theatre is always evolving and changing, and with it so too are audiences. While 2084 was in part a response to our wider engagement with the musical from a scholarly and analytical perspective, many elements of the narrative were tied to the personal experiences and interests of the creative team – especially myself in my role of choreographer, and Sarah as the lyricist and book writer\textsuperscript{109}. As a white, cis-het, Australian woman who was primarily collaborating with an asexual woman of mixed cultural heritage\textsuperscript{110}, I was firmly in the minority. But we were also united in our desire to not only subvert audience expectations, but also to explore narratives and characters that we felt were underrepresented on the musical stage. While we didn’t feel that it was necessarily appropriate for us to try and explore racial prejudices considering our own cultural background, there were certainly other cultural considerations that deeply informed our praxis.

George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, which forms a large part of the inspiration for 2084, was published after World War Two and is partially a criticism of the rise of communist Russia. By comparison, the narrative of 2084 was developed in a global landscape that was pre-Trump and pre-Brexit. From a more localised perspective, it was also written in the months and years leading up to the legalisation of same sex marriage in Australia. As a result, the themes Sarah and I were exploring within the narrative related to current issues which were being discussed on a global scale. Some of these themes and issues included representation of alternate sexualities, compulsory military recruitment, fake news and surveillance, mental health and memory, historical erasure, police brutality, and political protest. On a more personal level, our individual experiences inspired the relationships between the lead characters, particularly our exploration of the relationships between women.

This can be evidenced most clearly in 2084 by the importance that is placed on the female characters and their relationships. In contrast to Orwell’s original novel, more than half of the main characters in 2084 were female and were portrayed onstage by women (or female presenting actors). This included

\textsuperscript{109} This can be observed most notably in the number ‘I Remember’ which explores the relationship between Julia and her mother Roberta from childhood through to adolescence and into adulthood. The lyrics here evoke specific memories from our respective childhood experiences. See the annotated 2084 script in the Appendices for more.

\textsuperscript{110} As well as a homosexual man of Chinese-Malay descent.
those who were in the greatest positions of power like the Voice of Orwell, Roberta, and Felicity. Winston’s romantic partner from the books was brought front and centre and elevated to the lead character, and the relationships between Julia and the other women within 2084 including her mother Roberta, and her friend and fellow freedom fighter Felicity, form a large part of her character arc. In addition, the primary love story was between two male characters, offering a reading of Winston (Ian Winston in 2084) as bi or perhaps even pansexual. This relationship was not sensationalised in any way within the world of 2084, due in part to an unwillingness from us as creators to play into the stereotypes of same-sex couples within the musical genre.

As a small-scale musical, which has only been performed three times within an academic institution in an isolated city far from Broadway and the West End, the cultural impact of 2084 could be seen to be extremely localised. While it is unlikely to affect wider associations of dance in the musical at this time, the presentation of our research outcomes has yielded fascinating responses from audiences, as well as the wider research community. In terms of live audience responses, there was a notable lack of engagement from our survey respondents, regarding our inclusion of queer characters, and the use of colour-blind and gender-blind casting. My reading of this is that audience members were either entirely accepting of these elements of the performance, were not consciously aware of the historic marginalisation of these groups within the musical due to their cultural background, or that they did not want to bring these issues up in their responses – perhaps because they felt uncomfortable speaking about them. That being said, even with the information gathered from our survey participants it is difficult if not impossible to ascertain a definitive answer to this enquiry, as the questions were geared more towards the effectiveness of the lyrics and dance rather than the issues and themes we were exploring.

By comparison, the actors and creatives of 2084 dedicated a good deal of thought to their portrayal of these issues, particularly regarding the representation of queer (and potentially gender non-conforming) characters, as well as the symbolism of having specific characters portrayed by actors of colour. This was part of an ongoing dialogue we had with our performers during the process and included the discussion of a gesture which comprised of a raised fist being used as a salute. In rehearsals, the actress who played Roberta (a person of colour
who identifies as non-binary) raised the notion that the association of this gesture with the Black Panther Party and other minority groups might make it an inappropriate symbol for a group of predominantly white actors to use in performance. This led to a discussion with the cast regarding the historical associations of this gesture and whether it was being used in a way that would be considered disrespectful. The consensus was that as the gesture had been used by many different groups as a symbol of defiance and resistance, it should also be appropriate for the purposes of the choreography in 2084.

The casting of a young Muslim performer as the shrapnel in ‘One World’ was another element which was carefully navigated with the performers, along with the penultimate scene where Roberta is murdered by Will. Chosen for her physical training and small stature, the symbolism of having a Muslim woman who wore a head scarf playing the shrapnel was not an initial consideration in the casting of that part. When the rehearsal process commenced, I approached this performer and opened a dialogue about the possibility of her playing that role and if she would be comfortable with it. Due to her cultural and religious background this performer maintained an ongoing dialogue with me regarding my choreographic requirements and her own levels of personal comfort throughout the project. This would ultimately influence elements of the costume, as well as my use of partner work in ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’ as she did not want to perform intimate lifts with male performers. Ultimately, the choice was made to visually assimilate the shrapnel performer with the rest of the bomb ensemble by having all of them hooded and masked. Because she was mostly indistinguishable during this scene, it was felt that her casting here would not necessarily play into audience perceptions of Muslims as terrorists – indeed, if audience members did make this connection, they did not share it in their feedback.

The same consideration was extended to the performer playing Roberta, not only through a consideration of the raised fist gesture, but also the climactic scenes of Act Two where the character is gunned down by Will. The current culture of violence and police brutality towards people of colour in the United States is one which has been widely publicised on global forms of media and was something that we were deeply cognisant of when we cast a woman of colour as a character who was murdered in cold blood by a white, male law enforcer. The
decision to keep the scene between Roberta and Will as it appears in the show was done in part because there were already elements of police and military brutality present throughout the text\textsuperscript{111}. While our live audience members and survey respondents gave little to no feedback regarding our casting of the shrapnel and Roberta’s death, a discussion of these scenes at an international conference yielded some concern from academics and scholars who considered their impact in a more globalised context. I would suggest that similar casting choices in different performance contexts might yield a stronger audience response than what we received in Australia, and that any future iterations of this project would doubtless have to renegotiate these issues as appropriate.

\textit{Intertextuality and self-reflexivity}

Not only is \textit{2084} a musical, it is also a science fiction text which was heavily inspired by \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four}. The ongoing relevance of Orwell’s novel can be seen not only in its ongoing popularity as a work of literature, but also its wider impact on popular culture and entertainment in a world of Fake News, increased surveillance, and the potential dangers of data mining. This is one of the primary reasons we chose to draw inspiration from this text, along with a certain amount of organic research done by Sarah which saw her aligning thematic similarities between \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four} and our initial script concepts. Because it is not a direct adaptation of the source text, I would consider \textit{2084} to be a transformative work where its foundations are informed by the narrative, characters, and some of the major themes of Orwell’s writing; but reimagined and reworked for a contemporary audience.

While our hope was that audiences would be intrigued by the concept of a musical inspired by Orwell’s novel, we also had to prepare ourselves for the possibility that its status as an important literary and cultural icon might make it difficult for audiences to accept a transformative work like \textit{2084}. In hindsight, this was a particularly risky undertaking. Not only did we want to explore new themes and characters, we also wanted to make them sing and dance. While musical theatre is hardly the expected mode of performance for such a bleak narrative, thankfully the audience feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive. A

large proportion of our survey respondents cited a prior interest in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or dystopian and science fiction texts as one of the primary reasons that they came to see the show\(^{112}\) and while many expressed views that their engagement with *2084* was enhanced or aided by prior knowledge of the original novel, even those who were not as familiar with the novel were at least aware of its cultural significance. Many respondents were excited to see the themes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reworked for the contemporary moment, especially its relevance in the face of the global politics at the time it was performed.

The intertextual nature of the choreography in *2084* is perhaps best illustrated by the self-reflexive and hybridised nature of show dance itself. I refer here to data taken from audience response surveys, including the functions of dance that they identified (in *2084* as well as in the wider musical genre); as well as specific choreographic components from *2084* that they identified. Many of the survey respondents were able to identify the major dance styles that were utilised, with ballet, tap, jazz, and contemporary/freeform all being cited. Ballet topped the list, with 16% of respondents identifying it;\(^{113}\) however it was also identified as being the most stylistically anachronistic. Several respondents suggested that the numbers which utilised traditional show dance styles seemed out of place with the rest of the piece. This might imply that my goal of disrupting audience expectations\(^{114}\) was not always clear and may have led to a lack of understanding from some audience members as to what the choreography was attempting to achieve. This may also explain why only one respondent highlighted the subversion of their expectations in ‘One World’ in their survey, despite this number being one of the key examples of choreographic disruption that would ultimately frame the wider use of dance within the production.

Other elements of disruption were much better understood by the audience, especially when they included strong, simple visual imagery. The militaristic and robotic qualities of the OWC was identified by 10% of our respondents, while the juxtaposition of the OWC with the more freeform and violent movements of the Rebels was close to 6%. Aside from the presence of

\(^{112}\) See: Error! Reference source not found..

\(^{113}\) As opposed to 7% who mentioned tap, 4% who mentioned contemporary or free form styles, and 2% who mentioned jazz.

\(^{114}\) Specifically, through the disruption of performance in ‘One World’ and the use of ballet as a means of embodying the threat of surveillance in ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’.
ballet which I have already referred to above, the two most mentioned
choreographic components were the bonfire dances ‘The Burning’ and ‘Big
Brother is Watching You’ which were mentioned by 14.9% of respondents.
Meanwhile, ‘Spiders (Contraband)’ topped the list, with a whopping 19.4% of
respondents identifying it in some capacity. Many also independently identified
what they felt dance contributed to 2084, and to the wider musical genre. The
creation of emotions and/or feelings, mood and/or atmosphere, the enhancement
of narrative/lyrics/meaning, and the relationship to music were all mentioned
above visual impact\textsuperscript{115}. Other functions that were identified included the
explication of themes (specifically expression and self-expression, control, and
memories), the creation of energy and the use of space, the creation of
entertainment, the ‘live’-ness of musical theatre, as well as one mention of
audience experience.

The audience survey responses appear to suggest that the simpler and
more visually appealing a number was, and the more effective it was at evoking
the required emotion or mood for an audience were paramount in the successful
reading of my choreographic praxis. It also might suggest that some of the
framing of the more subversive elements of dance that I was exploring might have
needed to be less subtle for a general theatre going audience. In part, I believe
that this might be remedied by having a more professional cast who were stronger
actors, as well as through a subsequent reconsideration of the choreography and
how it might be framed more effectively. While the survey responses indicate that
I was certainly not entirely successful in my goals, the following sections will go
into further detail regarding my own analysis of the dance in 2084, exploring my
choreographic intent as well as drawing on other insights gained from the
audience.

The disruption and subversion of genre conventions and traditional modes of
performativity

Earlier I linked the musical to Richard Schechner’s modes of performance,
describing show dance as a form of ‘showing doing’ or ‘explaining showing doing’.
By deliberately highlighting the artifice and performative nature of musical theatre
dance against the gritty realism of 2084, the choreography in my creative artefact

\textsuperscript{115} See: Error! Reference source not found..
attempted to negotiate the space between them, disrupting and subverting traditional modes of performativity to create dramatic effects. This involved the disruption of dance and the use of dance as disruption, the deliberate juxtaposition of movement styles, and the subversion of audience expectations regarding the function or role of show dance to create pleasure and entertainment. This ties into the wider themes of performativity and the wearing of masks that were the original inspirations for my praxis, and involved several attempts to highlight the negative consequences of performing identities within the world of 2084.

The disruption of dance, and subsequently of audience expectations, is first introduced in ‘One World’ and serves as a frame of reference for further subversions later in the show. This routine evokes visual references to a variety of historical show dance idioms: the smiling showgirls, the use of repetitive precision style tap, and the visual nods to Bob Fosse in the use of bowler hats. The familiarity of these conventions was designed to lure the audience into a false sense of security, evoking a moment of pleasure and contentment before the number is disrupted by an explosion. This attack, embodied physically through the choreography, serves as a visual demonstration of the danger and violence of the world of 2084. It also destabilises audience expectations early on, allowing the audience to better frame other moments where the dance is disrupted, as in the end of ‘What Do You Want?’ where the characters collapse into wracking spasms brought on by the memory wipe technology, and the cut number ‘Something About You’ which would have been brought abruptly to a halt when Julia’s memory wipe band is damaged.

Dance in 2084 does not merely serve to be disrupted; at times it is specifically used as a disruptive force. Unlike traditional musical comedies where the function of disruptive dance was to serve as an entertaining divertissement, these numbers are one way that the choreography serves to highlight the discord between the OWC and the Rebels. This disharmony is alluded to in ‘One World’; but is further established in ‘The Celebration’. It is also present at the beginning of ‘What Do You Want?’ when the Rebels burst onstage and violently attack a freshly wiped citizen. This is achieved in part through the juxtaposition of the movement styles between the Rebels the OWC and is reinforced by other visual
cues such as the costuming, and the memory wipe bands\textsuperscript{116}. The movement idiom of the OWC was primarily inspired by military drills, drawing on precision style dance, marching, and the creation of straight or diagonal lines. These elements can be observed in several numbers including: ‘Prologue’, ‘The Plan’, and ‘One World Reprise’, as well as the final moments of ‘Big Brother is Watching You’. The sharper, more militaristic movements of the OWC are often juxtaposed by moments of sluggishness or small physical tics that were meant to be illustrative of the damage done by the memory wipes\textsuperscript{117}. Their blind faith in the corporation is also performed through their bodies and their voices, separating Roberta and Felicity from the Rebels by creating a protective circle in ‘The Celebration’, and consistently succumbing to the orders of their superiors\textsuperscript{118}.

The visual and dramatic counterpoint to the OWC are the Rebels, whose ideologies are also made visual through the choreography. The use of organic, asymmetrical patterning works to soften the violence and unpredictability of their movements, often shepherding the OWC and posturing but rarely engaging in physical contact with them. While the Rebels can still be seen fighting back against the corporation in the aftermath of ‘The Burning’, the shift into the latter half of the first act sees them become less active as a disruptive force. This involves an ongoing softening of their violent physical tendencies, first identified in the scene before ‘Dreams That Can’t Be Mine’; where a Rebel feigns an attempt at destroying one of the screens in front of Ian but does not follow through. Later examples include the assimilation of the Rebels into the OWC during ‘The Burning’, as well as the slow-motion destruction of property by the Rebels in ‘No More Wars’.

By the time we reach ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’ there are few flashing wipe bands to be found, making Julia’s dramatic shift from OWC to Rebel at the end of the first act, and Will’s after ‘Memory Matters’, more visually profound. This is explored even more poignantly in the final scenes where the wipe bands of

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize{116} As already stated, in the original workshop we used strips of red fabric as armbands to indicate the shift of performers from OWC to RE. For the finished product we had a more sophisticated prop which incorporated glowing blue bands. The memory wipe bands serve as a constant visual reminder of the corporation’s power and control over these characters, with the slow disappearing of the Rebels flashing bands coinciding with their assimilation into the OWC.

\footnotesize{117} Any future iterations would consider the physical and mental implications of the memory wipes further, as indicated earlier in my discussion of the science fiction elements of 2084.

\end{footnotesize}
Robert, Will and the Assistant turn off after their deaths, and in ‘Big Brother Is Watching You’ where the remaining ensemble assimilate completely into the OWC. While the subjugation of the characters has already been hinted at by their identical uniforms and the use of synchronised ensemble dance, the blue wipe bands serve as another visual representation of their loss of individual autonomy. The closing number is no joyous, celebratory song and dance. The fear of protest due to their terror of the corporation as illustrated in ‘Rehearsals’ is now swept aside by the power of mob mentality, with the entire ensemble succumbing to the totalitarian power of the OWC. It is a bleak moment, relying on a series of visual and aural cues that have been built up during previous numbers.

The surface level alignment of the Rebels with self-expression means that there is a temptation here to cheer for them as the underdogs as we do for the Bohemians in *We Will Rock You*. However, the morality within the world of 2084 is less black and white, and I would argue that the ideology of the Rebels is as disturbing as their OWC counterparts. The audience might commend the Rebels for railing against the dehumanising system that has stolen their memories, but the subtext hints that in their quest to bring down the corporation they have also been involved in violent acts of terrorism that have affected the wider community\(^{119}\). Both the Rebels and the OWC are framed in a negative light through the choreography, suggesting that the world of 2084 is more morally complex than a simple dichotomy of good and evil. This is made more complicated through the fluidity of the boundaries between the Rebels and the OWC. As it is, the Rebels are often seen moving in and out of the broader ensemble, differentiated only by their damaged wipe bands\(^ {120}\). This is an issue that perhaps could have perhaps been more clearly delineated through costume, however it also allowed the Rebels to assimilate much more easily into the ranks of the OWC not only during ‘The Plan’, but also during ‘The Burning’ and ‘Big Brother Is Watching You’. These numbers are already uncomfortable, especially the latter two which draw on explicit imagery of Nazi book burnings. But the I would argue that the ease in which the Rebels fold into the OWC, and the

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\(^ {119}\) The bombing at the theatre in ‘One World’ is referenced by Ian in Act Two and is visually linked to the defusing of the Assistant’s bomb in ‘In Your Eyes’ by the same masked performers. See my annotations on the script for more.

\(^ {120}\) See: ‘The Plan’.
blending of their movement idioms together, create a horrifying picture of just how quickly these groups have become sublimated through the medium of dance.

A subtler form of discomfort that was never quite realised the way that I envisioned can be found in the diegetic numbers which utilise traditional styles of concert and show dance. In the non-diegetic numbers, the Rebels and the OWC utilise a broad vocabulary of dance and movement forms ranging from modern jazz and hip hop to elements of physical theatre and contemporary dance. This provides a secondary juxtaposition to the diegetic or ‘performative’ numbers which draw on specific show dance idioms of tap, ballet, and jazz. In the case of ‘One World’, ‘Rehearsals’, and ‘Control’, the performers might be smiling but they are still very conscious of their subjugation by the corporation. This is reiterated in the lyrics, “I am one of millions / a cog in the great machine / I know my place I know my worth,” and “everything is perfect, they are watching us” (Courtis, 2016).

My direction for these numbers was that the performers should be performing with overly bright, but ultimately pained smiles. The concept here was that by moving beyond the camp cheesiness of the choreography, there would be a degree of discomfort experienced by the audience, as in ‘One’ from A Chorus Line or ‘Wilkommen’ from Cabaret. Although I do not feel that the performers were able to fully realise my vision, the effect was still noted by some audience members, with some even mentioning it in their survey responses. More articulated was their understanding of the divisions between the OWC and the Rebels, with many of them drawing on the distinctions between their choreographic vocabularies. Pleasingly, many of them identified the use of dance as a form of self-expression within the musical genre, positioning much of the dance in 2084 as an exception to this rule. While there are individual characters in 2084 who do rebel against the corporation through movement, they are generally anomalies. Julia engages in dance as a form of self-expression in ‘I Remember Pre-prize’, alternating between exploring the capabilities of her own body as she dances with the poster and remembering that she is potentially being watched. This dance alternates between dream-like abandon, delighted bursts of

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energy, and moments of fearfulness\textsuperscript{122}. An unnamed male chorus member in ‘Control’ briefly breaks rank only to be almost immediately absorbed back into the chorus. In all other cases, performativity and dance are generally coded in a negative light. The artifice and unrealistic nature of show dance is juxtaposed against the lack of autonomy of the characters. This is particularly important in consideration of the audience’s understanding of the sense or feeling of community in \textit{2084}, and the eventual assimilation of the entire chorus into the ranks of the OWC.

\textit{The subversion of pleasure and entertainment}

When I asked audience members immediately post-performance if they had enjoyed \textit{2084}, the general response that I received was that many of them did not feel that this was a text that could be ‘enjoyed’ in the traditional sense of the word. While there were elements of the show and my choreography that they had found interesting and entertaining, most of the people I spoke to in an informal capacity at this time suggested that the ending of it left them feeling unsettled rather than pleased or fulfilled. My co-collaborator, lyricist and librettist Sarah Courtis has suggested many times in discussions about \textit{2084} that the nicest thing that happens to most of the characters is that they get to die at the end, with none of them able to achieve catharsis except the Voice of Orwell. The characters who die are also unable to aid those they have left behind, trapped within a totalitarian system where death is their only hope of escape. The suggestion of a cyclical narrative which sees the end of \textit{2084} ultimately leading to the events of \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four} further enhances this feeling of helplessness, with the audience becoming aware during ‘Big Brother is Watching You’ that the victory of the corporation might only be the beginning of further hardships for these characters.

Because the choreography for \textit{2084} was crafted in part as a subversion of the traditional roles of show dance, I would like to consider my choreography briefly here through the lens of Millie Taylor’s discussion of loss and excess, and specifically the creation of pleasure and entertainment. My intent with the choreography for \textit{2084} was to invite the audience to consider the role of dance that was being presented onstage, both within the world of \textit{2084} as well as from

\textsuperscript{122} See Appendices for more.
their own perspective, and how feelings of discomfort might be created through the reframing and subversion of audience expectations of show dance within the musical as a form of entertainment, spectacle, and pleasure. I attempted to achieve this in several ways, including through the early alignment of dance with subjugation and control rather than pleasure and entertainment. As discussed earlier, this is first introduced through the disruption of ‘One World’, with dance consistently being framed as a negative force throughout the narrative. Within the world of 2084, the performative nature of camp is juxtaposed against the bleak reality of the setting, framing it as a primarily negative force which works to reinforce the subjugation and control of the characters rather than as a form of self-expression. This allowed me to use dance to explore themes of violence and conflict, and the loss of individual autonomy.

Another break from tradition can be found on the focus on romantic and familial rather than sexual love. Unlike 1984, where Winston and Julia’s rebellion involves them undertaking a sexual relationship, and We Will Rock You, which aligns sexuality with freedom of expression through dance, the characters in 2084 are mostly devoid of sensual or sexual pleasure. The chorus is de-sexualised, their gender neutralised by their identical uniforms, as well as by the depersonalisation and eventual assimilation of the ensemble into one group. This depersonalisation includes the bomb dancers in ‘One World’ and ‘In Your Eyes’, the masked dancers in ‘Spiders (Contraband)’, the workers in ‘The Plan’, and the chorus members in ‘Tick Tock’ who are little more than glorified props. In addition, there are very few examples of physical tenderness between characters, and only one moment of romantic physical contact. Although Julia weeps over the body of her fallen friend at the close of ‘One World’ she has no empathy to spare for the dying Roberta after she has been memory wiped in Act two. Similarly, although Felicity comforts and guides a lone citizen home during ‘No More Wars’, she has little sympathy for Julia when she discovers her crouched over her mother’s dead body. During ‘What Do You Want?’ the Rebels form a protective circle and support each other in a visual parallel to the OWC protecting Roberta and Felicity in ‘The Celebration’ – yet by the close of the piece there is no tenderness to any of the ensemble as they perform ‘Big Brother Is Watching You’. Indeed, the most explicitly tender moments are when Julia spontaneously hugs Ian when she sees
him after ‘I Remember’, and Will’s goodbye to the unconscious Ian at the end of ‘In Your Eyes’.

While the dance in 2084 might utilise elements of spectacle and entertainment, its relationship to pleasure is far more complex and relates back to its intertextuality, my choreographic influences, and my interactions with musical theatre theories. This is a text which denies the characters (and by extension, the audience) a happy ending. While the denial of a pleasurable ending subverts traditional notions of storytelling, in this instance I would suggest that it remains true to the tone of the performance texts that inspired it. For some audience members, they suggested that there was a degree of catharsis in the bleakness of 2084, counterbalanced by the more pleasurable and ‘readable’ elements taken from the musical genre. This included the choreography, and specifically the use of traditional show and concert dance styles, as well as the use of other recognisable conventions and structural elements. This included Julia’s solo, the conflicts between the Rebels and the OWC, my use of the ensemble effect, and the consistent use of repetition and juxtaposition within the choreography.

Visual symbolism and the depersonalisation of the chorus

I have already discussed some of the visual symbolism within the choreography 2084 above, namely the use of recurring visual motifs and specific movement styles which were linked to different character groupings, as well as to specific themes. As a choreographer, I was particularly conscious of how my choreography might be interpreted in relation to other elements of the production, not only aural elements like the music, lyrics, and soundscape, but also other visual elements including costuming, set, lighting, and even the casting. Below I will be discussing some of the symbolism within the choreography, including the implications of the use of certain styles of dance, the use of specific patterns and gestures, and how other design elements worked to enhance the choreography and the themes it was working to embody.

I have already discussed the use of specific show dance styles within 2084; however, I would like to go into deeper analysis of act one numbers ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’. The original concept for ‘Rehearsals’ was that it would include an extended dance break that would explore historical forms of show
dance. From a narrative perspective, this number would function as a means of commenting on the historical erasure of show dance as an art form within the world of *2084*, juxtaposing the loss of personal and cultural narratives, and serving as a means of returning to the disruption of traditional show dance first seen in ‘One World’. The original choreographic notes for ‘Rehearsals’ called for a variety of dance styles; however, the development of the music for this sequence went in a completely different artistic direction. This was part of a larger issue of creative collaboration with our composer Nick Choo, who often proved quite unyielding in his creative decisions. While I do not believe that this has ultimately proved detrimental to my research outcomes and the resultant artefact, from an artistic perspective I would have preferred to have had a more collaborative creative relationship with Nick as I did with Sarah. While he did his best to accommodate both of our creative visions, there are elements of the music which did not align with my vision and a lack of time (and funding) meant that ultimately I would end up sacrificing several of my more ambitious choreographic ideas.

For this number, Nick’s initial failure to accommodate my requests and the incredibly short time frame in which we were working meant that there was simply not enough time for him to complete the remainder of the score and cater to every request I made for amendments. After a discussion of this issue with Sarah, she and I agreed that the exclusion of this choreographic concept would not harm the overall narrative or characters, and that budgetary restraints and casting decisions meant that the creative vision we had both originally envisaged for ‘Rehearsals’ would not necessarily work for this iteration of the project. The resulting choreography saw this number move in a very different direction, influenced by the strict formalism of ballet rather than a more hybridised style drawing on a variety of show dance styles.

The role of ballet as an important artistic form even in the future world of *2084* was in part a subtle nod to my own historic research, and the sidelining of show dance in favour of more ‘artistic’ forms like contemporary and classical ballet. Because ballet is often seen to occupy the artistic apex of dance, it seemed obvious that One World would choose to resurrect this style of movement for their Memory Day celebrations. Their choice is hardly practical, as seen in the strain

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123 See my annotations on ‘Rehearsals’.
on the performers they have hired who struggle to keep up with the physical
demands of the choreography in both ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’. Both numbers
serve as a physical manifestation of the fear of having their memories re-wiped,
first suggested in the full body convulsions of the OWC and the Rebels at the end
of ‘What Do You Want?’ and manifesting here as smaller physical tics. While
‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’ are not dissimilar to a traditional ballet or dance class,
they are punctuated with small, abstract movements, including small twitches,
partnered stretching, and movements reminiscent of children’s games. The end
of ‘Rehearsals’ sees the chorus form a classic triangular pattern reminiscent of
the choreography of the many competition troupes I participated in as a young
dancer. As the performers step touch and dance with the bowler hats they sing
the lines: “You are the corporation and it is you / Everything will be fine / just fine”
(Courtis, 2016). The subtext of course is that everything is clearly not fine, as
evidenced by the robotic movements and thinly veiled fear which will follow in
‘Control’. These are imperfect performers, and no matter how hard they try they
are putting on a performative front for the sake of being accepted by the
corporation.

The repetition of patterns, movement styles, and gestures within the
choreography are one of the ways that I provided a visual link to the cyclical
nature of the narrative. The juxtaposition between the movement styles and
patterning of the OWC and RE is one that I have discussed at some length
already, drawing on insights gleaned from my own pre-existing knowledge of
choreography; as well as the excellent figures provided by Sunderland and
Pickering in their guide to choreographic praxis in the musical. Further
acknowledgement must be made here of Kislan, who suggests that symmetrical
patterning tends to be restful and aesthetically pleasing whereas asymmetry is
more restless and exciting (Kislan, 1987, p. 182). This is certainly true of the
juxtaposition between the OWC and the RE; however, there are elements of the
choreography in 2084 that also break from this logic. The use of asymmetry in
patterning and gesture is used to illustrate both relaxation and chaos – depending
on the context of the number. This is at odds to Kislan’s suggestions about the
effects of symmetry and asymmetry (Kislan, 1987, p. 182), and is one of multiple
levels of subversion that I attempted to incorporate into my choreography.
One example of asymmetry being used to create a more restful image can be found in the scattering of the chorus after ‘Rehearsals’. These characters are at their most relaxed here, despite the ongoing threat of surveillance and this is the one time that the OWC are most alike to the Rebels, with their random patterning designed to give a sense of relaxation instead of chaos. Comparatively, the end of ‘What Do You Want?’ sees the straight lines of the OWC dissolving into chaos under the influence of the Rebels. The climax of the number sees the characters reeling in multiple directions, lunging forward as if falling, only to catch themselves at the last moment. The inner conflict of both groups is illustrated here through the movement, with the restless and chaotic nature of the choreography being highlighted by atmospheric lighting and the layered effect of their singing voices. This number also leads directly into ‘The Burning’, which is arguably one of the most visually exciting numbers of the piece.

Watching the video of ‘The Burning’ I was most struck by the feeling of violence and spontaneity it provoked, despite the patterning being predominately symmetrical. This number is focussed not on the characters internal world, but on the external, indicated through the rhythmic pull of the chorus first towards Will, and later the bonfire. In the initial workshop of 2084, the corporation was deliberately aligned with religious symbology and ritual\(^{124}\). In ‘The Burning’ and ‘Big Brother Is Watching You’ the ensemble dances in circular formations around a central bonfire, evoking images of primitive rituals rooted in dance and movement. In earlier numbers, circles are used as a form of protection\(^{125}\); but here they are also symbolic of the cyclical nature of history, and of the characters becoming entirely caught up in the doctrine of the corporation. This was inspired in part by the two-minute hate in Nineteen Eighty-Four, a practice which is referenced in the choreography, lyrics, and the audio-visual elements in ‘Big Brother Is Watching You’.

Another direct reference to Nineteen Eighty-Four can be found in the lyrics, taking quotes directly from the party slogans in the novel: “ignorance is strength / war is truly peace / freedom’s really slavery / and God is power” (Courtis, 2016). These are accentuated by gestures which form part of the gestural language of

\(^{124}\) At this stage ‘The Celebration’ was titled ‘Opening Hymn’ and the OWC danced with candles and created small effigies. See earlier in this chapter for further discussion.

\(^{125}\) See: ‘The Celebration’ and ‘What Do You Want’.
the choreography. Introduced in ‘The Celebration’, they can also be found in the scene between ‘The Burning’ and ‘One World Reprise’, and again during ‘Big Brother is Watching You’. This series of gestures also introduces the One World salute, a movement which begins as a gesture of rebellion but is ultimately co-opted by the corporation. In the context of 2084, combining the party slogans with this visual symbol which has historically been used by marginalised groups indicates the power of the corporation over the populace. The salute is also linked visually to the audio-visual elements, with footage of book burnings in Nazi Germany projected during ‘The Burning’, which is in turn linked visually by the return of the bonfire prop in ‘Big Brother is Watching You’. Just as the framing of the Rebels as terrorists through the dialogue and movement was designed to create conflict in the audience as to who they should be cheering for, the authorial intent behind evoking symbolism from Nazi Germany was absolutely to align the totalitarian power of the One World Corporation with real world examples of fascism. Most western audience members with even a cursory understanding of twentieth century history would understand the moral and ethical stance of the corporation based on these visual cues, particularly in this contemporary moment when we are seeing the rise of neo-Nazism on a global scale.

The final piece of visual symbolism that I will be discussing here is the depersonalisation and dehumanisation of the ensemble, and how this was achieved through a combination of choices made involving the choreography, lyrics, set, and costuming. The dance in 2084 is consistently used to illustrate the subjugation and control of its characters by One World. The characters in 2084 are constantly performing in some way, pressured by the threat of surveillance and expectations put upon them by One World. The idea that constant performing, and the denial of the true self can be damaging is illustrated at various points during 2084. The choreography sees the characters struggling with the effort of maintaining the necessary façade, but the lack of personal autonomy within the chorus owes itself to many different elements, including the OWC members who refer to each other only by number rather than name

126 See Scene Five and Seven in the annotated script of 2084.
masks in ‘Spiders (Contraband)’, and a recurring visual motif of a single eye which evokes the Big Brother eye from Nineteen Eighty-Four\textsuperscript{127}.

The objectification and dehumanisation of the ensemble is achieved through the choreography by reducing their role to set pieces and props, mere cogs in the corporation’s propaganda machine. Evidence of this can be seen in the numbers ‘The Plan’ and ‘Rehearsals’, which I have already discussed, and ‘Tick Tock’, which solved the issue of having non-automated set by utilising the chorus to move pieces manually. The dehumanisation of the ensemble is also suggested using repetitive and mechanical movements. Audiences were very responsive to the use of sharp, militaristic and mechanical movements for the OWC, particularly when contrasted with the similarly violent but more chaotic and organic movements performed by the Rebels. The symbolism seen here in the movement styles works to show the divide between groups, inviting audiences to differentiate between them and draw conclusions based on their own perceptions.

While I have barely scratched the surface here, for the purposes of my thesis I have sought to identify and analyse some of the primary uses of visual symbolism in order to facilitate better understanding of my choreographic intent and how audiences responded to them. In the next section, I will be engaging with some of the audience responses we received that I have not already covered, namely some of the surprising readings of the choreography that I had not considered. This includes a consideration of individual and communal responses, including a more in-depth analysis of audience responses to ‘Spiders (Contraband)’, which surprised me by becoming the most cited element of the choreography by our respondents. I will also be concluding the chapter with a slightly more personal reflection on 2084, and how I might reshape the choreography in any future iterations.

\textit{Audience responses}

In Taylor’s discussion of audience reception, she suggests that there can be a marked difference in the way that musical texts are interpreted by

\textsuperscript{127} The Big Brother eye motif is present in the set, the audio-visual elements (the image of Felicity zooms in closer and closer throughout the show until all that can be seen is her eye), the sequined motifs on the back of the leotards in ‘One World’, as well as the pendants that are worn by Roberta and Felicity.
communities versus individuals. Because of this, part of our research and data collection included human participant research in the form of voluntary, anonymous audience questionnaires. These documents were made available in a paper format to audience members who came and saw the live performances of 2084. The questions asked and the subsequent use of the data collected were created in accordance with the ethical standards adhered to by Murdoch University, with appropriate clearance from the Ethics committee. Because the creative artefact in question was a collaboration with Sarah Courtis for her own exegesis examining the lyric in musical theatre, the questions were designed to engage with elements of both the choreography and the lyrics. In addition, they were designed specifically to help both researchers gauge individual and communal responses to 2084, and to identify key trends in their answers. These surveys gleaned a wealth of insight into audience perceptions of 2084, indicating largely positive responses to the choreography and lyrics, and a fascinating look into the elements of the production that were most interesting or effective for our respondents.

The questions that were asked were as follows:

1) Age

- 16 or under
- 17-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-39
- 40-50
- 60+

2) Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other/prefer not to say

3) Would you consider yourself a regular consumer of musicals? (This can include live theatrical performances as well as film and television adaptations.)

- Yes
- No

4) Do you prefer to watch live musical theatre, or film/television adaptations? Why?

5) Approximately how many live musical theatre performances would you say you attend per annum?
6) Have you ever travelled abroad or interstate in order to watch a live musical theatre performance?
   Yes  No

7) What was it about 2084: A Musical that most informed your decision to come and watch it?

8) Did 2084: A Musical meet with any pre-existing expectations you had?

9) What did you enjoy or find interesting about the dance and movement in 2084? Please mention any specific moments you can remember, or that stood out for you.

10) Do you think that dance is an important component of musicals? Why or why not?

11) What did you enjoy or find interesting about the lyrics in 2084?

12) Were the lyrics important to your overall experience as an audience member?

As part of my exploration of the data that was collected from the audience feedback surveys, I worked to identify key words, trends, and recurring themes within the surveys which I then graphed in a variety of ways. The data in the following graphs and tables was collated from these surveys after the completion of the performance run, and while the data gathered regarding audience demographics ultimately had little bearing on my research, questions 7-10 were specifically focused on dance and choreography and provided vital insight into audience expectations and understanding of my work which I have quoted in my thesis.

Because the information provided by respondents regarding my choreography was more pertinent to my research than their age, gender, or the number of musicals that they engage with on an annual basis, I have deliberately not analysed the correlation (if any) between specific demographic groups and their identification of specific choreographic and dance elements. I have included
a table which indicates the age and gender of our respondents as a point of interest, however the other tables include data taken predominantly from questions 7-10 and are presented here either in a variety of formats including bar and pie charts. I have chosen these formats to hopefully illustrate the clearest visual representation of the data collected.

![Audience Response Forms by Age and Gender](image1)

**Figure 4 - Audience Feedback Survey Data (Age & Gender)**

![Would you consider yourself a regular consumer of musicals?](image2)

**Figure 5 - Audience Feedback Survey Data (Question 3)**
Figure 6 - Audience Feedback Survey Data (Question 7)

Figure 7 - Audience Feedback Survey Data (Audience Identified Motifs, Styles, and Design)
• 06. Spiders
• 23. Big Brother Is Watching You
• 10. The Burning
• 13. Rehearsals/Control
• 19. Tick Tock
• 01. Overture/Opening, 09. What Do You Want?
• 05. I Remember Preprise, 07. The Plan, 11. One World Reprise, 16. I Remember Preprise 2

**Figure 8 - Audience Feedback Survey Data (Audience Identified Dance Numbers)**

**Figure 9 - Audience Feedback Survey Data (Question 10)**
While the most commonly reason cited for coming to see the show was personal connections to the cast and crew, many respondents independently indicated their interest in adaptation and intertextuality in relation to Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and an enjoyment of dystopian narratives. Incredibly, only one respondent indicated that they came to *2084* because they enjoyed musicals, despite 60% of respondents considering themselves a regular consumer of musical texts. Gratifyingly, the question of whether the show had met with their pre-existing expectations was met with resounding positivity, with participants’ responses ranging from pleasantly surprised, generally impressed, to completely “blown away” by the quality of the work. Many of them were also impressed at my capacity to fit such a large cast and such ambitious choreography into such a small performance space. In any future iterations of *2084*, I would be intrigued to see how audiences might respond to seeing the choreography adapted to a larger space, and whether this might change the perception of the use of large ensemble number.

Some of the major trends which I have already identified include an awareness of the major dance styles used, the relationship between choreography and other design elements, a very clear understanding of how movement was being used to embody themes of control, and of the visual differences between the OWC and the Rebels. Perhaps unsurprisingly there were several respondents who picked up on the unevenness of dance skill across the ensemble, and although this and many of the other responses we received were expected, there were also several which were surprising.

One of my personal expectations was that audience members would respond in a largely positive way to the energy in the larger ensemble numbers. While most respondents enjoyed these numbers, there was some critique about there being too many ensemble dances. I found this fascinating, particularly considering there are only four numbers where all twenty cast members are onstage, most of which occur in the second act. Most of the large-scale

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128 See: [Error! Reference source not found.].
129 See [Error! Reference source not found.].
130 For comparison, there are three numbers in the first act with a maximum of 18 cast members (‘The Celebration’, ‘The Plan’, ‘The Burning’) and four numbers with 16 cast members spread across the first act (‘One World’, ‘What Do You Want?’, ‘Rehearsals’, ‘Control’).
numbers are also preceded by a number with significantly less performers\textsuperscript{131} in order to create a greater visual juxtaposition and kinaesthetic lift between numbers. Finally, the presence of the entire ensemble onstage did not necessarily equate to higher levels of energy and movement intensity within my choreography, with several key numbers relying on the use of low intensity movement to create the effects I wanted to achieve\textsuperscript{132}.

Another response (or perhaps lack of response) which was also surprising to me was the lack of reflection on the opening number ‘One World’. My expectation was that the disruption of the dance by the explosion would have a marked effect on audiences; but the surveys do not necessarily reflect this. Only one respondent specifically mentioning ‘One World’ by name in their response, while another discussed the subversion of their expectations of the choreography: “it was against the rules and therefore quite erratic at times” (Anonymous, 2016). It is unclear from the surveys received whether my choreographic intentions for this number were made clear enough or whether respondents were more engaged with other aspects of the choreography. In an informal discussion with an audience member after the show, they revealed that the style and tone of ‘One World’ had initially confused them as it did not meet with their pre-existing expectations of what 2084 might be. After the explosion their understanding of the scene shifted, the dramatic tonal shift leading to a dual sense of discomfort and an understanding of why I had framed the number in this way. Unfortunately, there is not enough quantitative data to truly know how effective this number was, and in any future iterations, I would likely utilise this data to inform my process.

Arguably the most startling response I received was the audience’s engagement with the number ‘Spiders (Contraband)’. The visual concept of this number was based in part on the contemporary mime work of Claire Heggen and Yves Marc of the Theatre Du Mouvement in France. While searching online for costume inspiration for 2084 I discovered a series of images from their work which would go on to serve as direct inspiration for the costuming of ‘Spiders (Contraband)’ in 2084, as well as a jumping off point for my own

\textsuperscript{131} Notable exceptions include ‘Control’ and ‘Rehearsals’ which occur in quick succession within the same scene, and the final three numbers at the end of act two: ‘Rehearsals Reprise’, ‘In Your Eyes’, ‘Big Brother is Watching You’.

\textsuperscript{132} See: ‘Spiders (Contraband)’, ‘Rehearsals (Reprise)’, ‘In Your Eyes’.
choreographic ideas. Of note was the use of partnered work to create unsettling images, and the use of white masks to create stunning and unsettling visuals seemed fitting for 2084, with its themes of surveillance. Although my initial costume brief incorporated multiple masks for each performer, due to a combination of performer mobility, budgetary restrictions, and costuming issues, the number of masks was dramatically decreased during the rehearsal process for 2084.

Compared to the dramatic sequences between the OWC and the Rebels or the numbers which involved the bonfire, I personally considered the choreography in ‘Spiders’ to be visually dynamic, but ultimately simplistic. I was not prepared for the popularity of this number, indicating a shared communal response among the survey respondents who described it as: “striking”, “cool and creepy”, “ghostly”, and a “wow moment!” (Anonymous, 2016). In the above section on intertextuality I discussed the functions of choreography which were identified by the most respondents, namely mood/atmosphere and emotions/feelings. This may go some way to explaining why ‘Spiders’ was so popular in communal audience responses. Despite being simple from a choreographic perspective, this number had visual appeal, worked to create mood and atmosphere, while also evoking the theme of surveillance.

The individual interpretations that came out of the surveys regarding this number also saw deeper analysis behind the symbolism of the masks, with one respondent commenting; “I loved the use of the masks representing the 3 [sic] different faces of our personalities” (Anonymous, 2016). This analysis of the visual symbolism of the masks was one I had not considered, and I was so struck by this response that I went on to perform more research into the imagery of the three faces133. While the wider response to this number might not have been altered greatly by this change, for some respondents their reading of this number may have been entirely different if not for external production factors.

133 From my research my best guess is that they were most likely referencing the Japanese proverb; “Everyone has three faces. The first face, you show to the world. The second face, you show to your close friends, and your family. The third face, you never show anyone. It is the truest reflection of who you are.” The metaphor of having ‘three faces’ can also be found in the fields of sociology, psychotherapy, and psychiatry, with further links possibly being made to Sigmund Freud’s division of the psyche into id, ego, and superego, or the three wise monkeys found in Tendai-Buddhist philosophy.
Image 1 - “Tant que la tête est sur le coup” (1978)
Photo Credit: Fastome management

Image 2 - “Tant que la tête est sur le coup” (1978)
Photo Credit: Anne Nordmann and G. Delahaye
Image 3 - “Tant que la tête est sur le coup” (1978)
Photo Credit: Anne Nordmann and G. Delahaye

Image 4 - “Catherine et l’armoire” (1985)
Photo credit: Jean-Paul Dumontier
In general, our surveyed audience showed a relatively clear understanding of the ways in which I had used the choreography and dance to embody the subjugation and control of the characters by the One World Corporation and the self-expression of the Rebels and of Julia. They had strong opinions about the use of specific dance styles, with some who enjoyed the use of ballet and tap and others who thought that these sequences did not fit the tone and style of the show. Some of the subtler elements were not directly identified including the recurrence of specific patterns and the deliberate inversion of traditional show dance conventions including: a dance soloist who is not emblematic of her wider community, and the use of dance to show subjugation and control instead of as a mode of self-expression. Perhaps most interestingly was the identification of repeated visual motifs and movement styles, particularly the use of military style marching and stiff robotic movements for the OWC, the circle dances around the bonfires, and the depersonalisation of the ensemble through their employment as stage hands, best exemplified in ‘The Plan’ and ‘Tick Tock’.
Final Reflections

While I was pleased with the visual and emotional resonance of the choreography for *2084* at the time of its staging, the demands of managing such a large-scale production proved incredibly difficult. Not only was my dance rehearsal schedule frequently disrupted due to absences from the cast, none of the cast members had the required level of training and dance teaching to truly assist my vision as a dance captain or assistant choreographer. In hindsight I feel that the production would have benefited greatly if I had more support in my role as choreographer, and certainly I would have benefitted greatly from a choreographic mentor with more experience in the field. In addition, whilst I am incredibly proud of what my cast members achieved, particularly those with little to no dance training, the final product would have been much stronger if I had been working with trained dancers. The use of a singing and dancing chorus was not feasible for this performance space even though it may have been more effective in elevating the songs and dances. Instead, our casting process for both the workshops and the final production was based largely on compromise and resulted in a cast which comprised of a group of dedicated amateur performers.

While they all had acting experience, their singing and dancing ability differed vastly. This obviously had a huge effect on how I choreographed and staged the piece, and resulted in some major structural changes, including the placement of the intermission as well as the removal of one of the numbers. As a choreographer I felt simultaneously liberated and limited by the abilities of my cast, particularly in the moments of military style precision; where I was frustrated by the lack of committed, strong movements from some of them. One notable example being the straight lines at the end of ‘One World Reprise’ where no amount of practice seemed to be able to make one of the performers cognizant of how to correct the patterning and make the line crisp and straight. While working with a variety of skillsets may have created a more realistic struggle with specific movements, particularly in the balletic sequences, I am tremendously aware that these same effects could have been achieved through the talents of much stronger dancers, while simultaneously allowing me greater scope in the other numbers rather than having to simplify my concepts in order to complete the work in a very short space of time.
Since staging 2084, and completing my exegetical component, I have deeply considered how I would alter the production and its choreography if it were to be restaged. This has involved ongoing discussions with my primary collaborator, Sarah, and has included suggestions of reframing the entire narrative, excising numerous characters and numbers, as well as returning to a deeper consideration of the memory wipe technology. The concept of memory loss at war with muscle memory was touched on ever so briefly in Julia’s solo dance in ‘I Remember Pre prise’ where her muscle memories allows her to dance even her mind does not necessarily remember how. In a future iteration of 2084, I would be interested in exploring this disconnect between mind and body even further and making it much more explicit to audiences. If it was shown that a memory of how to move in a specific way could be uploaded via the memory wipe bands, what then would be the implications for numbers like ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’ where the characters are already being controlled through their fear of Roberta and the watchful eyes of the corporation? Ideally, the potential complications and ethical concerns of this type of technology would be a much greater focus and would include physical and mental ramifications for those whose minds were altered.

The use of dance to indicate flashbacks and memories is another aspect which I would have liked to have developed further. For ‘One World’ this might involve a dramatic reconsideration of the staging, perhaps revisiting some of my initial concepts which saw the routine being observed by the audience from behind and giving a sense of watching it from backstage, perhaps even through a scrim as in ‘See Me’ and ‘I Remember’. Arguably this effect could also be created using lighting, but on such a small stage we felt that the scrim worked to provide an effective visual barrier between the memories and the present day. The reframing of ‘One World’ is something that would require deeper consideration, and perhaps extra workshopping to ensure that the shift in perspective would not lessen the audience’s empathetic responses to the explosion and the grief of the characters. Nevertheless, I feel that it would be a visually effective way of staging the action in this scene, with the potential destruction of the scrim serving as a visual symbol of the damage wrought by the memory wipes, and the eventual breakdown of the technology later in the piece.
The dehumanisation of the ensemble by using them as stage hands and physical objects as seen in ‘Tick Tock’, as well as the explosion in ‘One World’ and the defusing of the Assistant in ‘In Your Eyes’, are also elements that I would love to restage using visual effects to further enhance, or perhaps even to replace the choreography. While the physical embodiment of the explosion in ‘One World’ was effective to a point; it never had quite the visual impact that I had imagined. This was in part due to the technical limitations of the performers as well as the venue we were in, and could be rectified in part by having a larger performance area to work with and then allowing other visual elements such as the lighting and set to isolate the choreography and accentuate it more. The use of the wheeled boxes in ‘Tick Tock’, whilst primitive, was nonetheless effective though my feeling is that a larger set, perhaps with a combination of automated and free moving pieces might have made not only this number, but many others more visually impactful. The use of automated set pieces in ‘Tick Tock’ may have also afforded a greater sense of urgency as the Assistant moves through the city with Will in pursuit. A larger and at least partially automated set would have arguably allowed for greater scope in the choreography across the entire production; however, we were ultimately limited not only by the performance space, but also by our funding.

A larger budget would of course benefit multiple other elements of the production, particularly the costumes. In my original concept for ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Rehearsals Reprise’, I had hoped to evoke the image of the show girl, along with all of its associated history and symbolism. My choreographic notes in earlier drafts envisaged these numbers as something closer to the ‘Loveland’ sequence in Sondheim’s Follies. While our budget did not extend to more lavish costumes, this is something I would be keen to revisit, and another way in which the themes of performativity could be explored. It would also dovetail nicely into a reconsideration of ‘In Your Eyes’; to make more explicit the fact that this number is a moment of fantasy, suspended in a frozen moment of time, perhaps by using the silent spectres of the show girls to disarm the bomber.

My final note is that I was never happy with the choreography for ‘What Do You Want?’; for either the workshop or the final iteration of the show. In the final artefact, I feel that the urgency of the Rebels might have been more effective had they addressed the audience instead of, or perhaps as well as, the OWC
members onstage. I also had to dramatically simplify the choreography from the workshop due to the lack of experience from the performers, and I feel that the combination of these two factors only served to highlight the weakness of this number. Additionally, there were certain choreographic elements further into the routine that had to be changed to account for issues such as performer fatigue and a lack of training. As a choreographer these restrictions were frustrating and contributed to my overall dissatisfaction with this number. I felt that the ending was probably the strongest point, but that the sequences leading towards it were ultimately disappointing on reflection. As the first major physical exploration of the Rebels, I wish that there had been more time and resources available to me in order to better realise my choreographic vision for this number.

Conclusions

In its current format, I would argue that 2084 is unique. The choreography was designed to explore the relationship between theory and praxis, and how subverting traditional conventions and codes of show dance might affect audience perceptions. Unlike most musicals which are developed for artistic or commercial purposes, 2084 was created solely for artistic and academic purposes and the combined use of traditional and praxis-based research also afforded me the freedom as a choreographer to explore theories and conventions of musical theatre dance, but also allowed for my own artistic expression to flourish in the resulting creative work. While my traditional research was integral to the completion of 2084, equally my exploration of the history of show dance and of musical theatre theories and practices were guided by the ever-shifting nature of my praxis.

Another unique element of this project was that Sarah and I were not allowed to profit monetarily in any way from the show due to ethical considerations. Despite this, the three-day run of the show gleaned enough profit that we were able to give a small profit share to members of the cast and crew, with several audience members coming back for repeat viewings of the text. Along with the constructive but mostly positive audience feedback that we received, this suggests that there was great interest in the project not only from our performers, but also from our audience members.
Regarding the human participant research, I would suggest that the culture of performer feedback cultivated during the initial workshop which ultimately led to us utilising audience surveys were both integral elements of my research. To have consistent, thoughtful feedback throughout the workshop process and then again during the rehearsal process for the final creative piece from our performers proved invaluable. Similarly, the verbal feedback received from our small focus audience for the workshop, and then the larger audiences for the final iteration of 2084, gleaned intriguing insights that I would otherwise have been blind to. The use of human participant research provided an invaluable outsider perspective on the completed artefact that allowed me to step back from my role as a choreographer and performer and instead see it through the eyes of our performers and the audience, identifying their understanding of key themes, choreographic styles and motifs, and the ultimate effectiveness of the choreography and movement I created for my praxis.

In conclusion, I feel that the exploratory goals that I set out to achieve through the choreography for 2084 were generally successful, with each number within the show achieving this success to varying degrees. The audience response surveys indicate a degree of understanding of my use of disruption in place of cohesion; the subversion of traditional musical theatre conventions like camp, parody, pleasure, and entertainment, to instead evoke feelings of tragedy and alienation; and the use of dance to highlight specific themes within the text. Although there are many things that I would change if I were to re-stage this production now, 2084 as it currently exists is a fascinating performance piece, and its creation was instrumental to my understanding of the nature between traditional and praxis-based forms of research.

Perhaps the most interesting finding that I made, was that it was not only the audience whose expectations ended up being subverted. In the end, my own expectations of how audience members might read and respond to my choreography were not always correct, illustrating a possibility that individual responses might be used to glean further insights into musical theatre and its dance in future research. Whether that is through a remounting of this same production, or through the work of other practitioners working within the field remains to be seen. As a researcher just starting out in this field, my hope is that in the ever-expanding field of musical theatre discourse there might be space for
others to expand on some of the theories and frameworks that I have discussed within this thesis, and that in time there will be greater focus on the importance of show dance in all its multitudinous forms.
CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this exegesis I have attempted to answer a variety of questions relating to musical theatre dance including:

- What is musical theatre dance?
- What are the functions it performs?
- How does it achieve these goals in conjunction with other musico-dramatic elements within the frame of an interdisciplinary art form like the musical?
- What expectations does an audience have of musical theatre dance and what happens when these expectations are subverted or disrupted in some way?

At this juncture the best answer I can make is that musical theatre dance can be many things. Predominantly, I believe it is an incredibly adaptable art form that can be used to create images and moods which speak to an audience; both through kinaesthetic excitement, as well as the complex interplay it enjoys with other musico-dramatic elements within performance. By making that which is aural (dialogue, lyrics, music) and esoteric (character, subtext, psychology) into something visible and corporeal that an audience can experience and engage with on multiple levels, musical theatre dance has the capacity to create images of beauty through functions that include spectacle, entertainment, and the pleasure of the excesses of song and dance. Equally though, it can be used to create images that are unsightly, disjunctive, unpleasant, or even alienating for audiences. The use of juxtaposition between camp excess and disruption or loss within the realm of dance can also be specifically utilised to create or shift mood, emotion, and atmosphere.

Unlike screen musicals, the dance in live musicals is largely ephemeral. It exists only in the performative moment, and then never again in quite the same way. As a result, much of its power, as well as perhaps the greatest barrier to understanding it, lies in its ephemerality. Those I have spoken to about my research have consistently been astounded at the historical lack of literature surrounding dance in musicals compared to other conventions of the genre. The mere fact alone that there has been no updated history of the genre since Kislan’s *Hoofing on Broadway,* when so much has changed in the way that dance is both
perceived and utilised within the live musical is evidence that there is still a long way to go before a wider cultural and artistic appreciation of the form can be achieved.

Part of this involves a continuation of the work currently being done by historians and scholars, which I have explored and expanded upon within my exegesis and my praxis. Even as the field of historical research broadens, the growing number of authors who are engaging with performance texts and practitioners from a wider range of geographical regions offer new perspectives on the place of the musical in a global context. For my own part, my historical research still highlights the ideological shift from dance-as-entertainment to dance-as-narrative within the twentieth century, suggesting that the seeds of integrated or narrative-led dance were present much earlier than previously thought. However, I would also argue that the use of show dance as a potentially disruptive and disjunctive force has also been a part of the genre from very early in its development, and that an understanding of contemporary show dance practices must be drawn from an understanding of dance as a disruptive or disjunctive force, as well as its capacity for cohesion.

Current practices show that audience understanding of traditional show dance conventions is allowing practitioners to use dance in increasingly creative ways. Disruptive dance can be used to create comedic, pleasurable effects just as readily as dramatic or tragic ones. This result is increasingly complex and multilayered performance texts, making the musical and its dance an increasingly fascinating area to engage with, both as an audience member and a scholar. The role of dance as a form of meaning-making within the musical is an arguably complex field of study that is only now beginning to receive the kind of academic attention it has been lacking for much of its history. It is no longer merely enough to reduce the role of musical theatre dance to an aesthetic embellishment, and the ongoing move away from integration and towards multi-modal methods and theories reflects this. To perpetuate outdated assumptions about the form is to ignore the dramatic and theatrical capabilities of not only show dance, but of musicals in general. Rather than questioning how realistic, integrated, or diegetic a number is, analysis of the musical is now inviting scholars to consider not only the relationship between book and number, but also the inherent theatricality of the interplay between them. It is only through the combination of each disparate
element that a musical production creates meaning for an audience, whether through the cohesion of different performative elements, or through dramatic subversions designed to make audiences more deeply interrogate the media they are consuming. To discount the role of dance in the musical as frivolous ornamentation is to ignore the historical importance of it within the genre, not just as a narrative tool and a means of shaping the audiences understanding of the world onstage but also as a dynamic visual element that can evoke various emotions or moods for audience members.

Show dance can consist of kick lines and pretty girls in feathered headdresses, but it can also be provocative, thought provoking, disjunctive, and even alienating. It can also perform several functions at a time, depending on where the audience is looking, and their understanding or reading of what is before them. Even the simplest choreography has the capacity to capture the attention of an audience member – a fact that influenced not only the focus of my academic and scholarly research, but also my praxis. Although the survey data I received regarding 2084 yielded some data that I had predicted, many of the responses I received were honestly surprising. To me this indicates the global impact of the musical genre, that even in one the most isolated capital cities in the world audiences were able to surprise me with their insight, their understanding, and their level of critical engagement with 2084.

Thankfully for the next generation of practitioners and scholars, ongoing interest within the field of musical theatre suggests that academic studies in this area will continue to expand in a more global manner going forward. While there are still few scholar-practitioners in the field of musical theatre dance, my hope is that in the future, more may have the opportunity to engage with theory and praxis in a similar capacity to my own research. As Dunbar suggests; “Practice in itself may not make perfect research, but the practice of research will tend in that direction” (Dunbar, 2014, pp. 65-66). The intersection between traditional modes of research and praxis in this area is still very much in its infancy, and I am intrigued to see where it will go next. As the musical theatre genre continues to shift and change with new hybridised movement styles and different ways of utilising dance, the theoretical frameworks surrounding musical theatre will doubtless continue to do much the same. Hopefully, there will be other scholars
who continue to interrogate historical norms, experimenting with theory and praxis to create new worlds onstage using dance.

Ultimately, while most scholars working within the area may have different perspectives on musical theatre and its dance, the one thing that they all seem to agree on is that it is a difficult and oftentimes problematic area to study. “What kind of drama is this?” asks McMillin in the concluding chapter of *The Musical as Drama*. “It is popular and illegitimate, originating in vaudeville and revue as well as in operetta, and retaining links to the tradition of low culture despite its high prices” (McMillin, 2006, p. 179). This neatly bookends the question he asked in the preface and which I quoted in the introduction to my literature review: “Are we able to use our methods of analysis – historical, musical, literary, philosophical – and still get this form of popular entertainment right?” (McMillin, 2006, p. xi). My own research has led me to believe that there is no one correct or right way to analyse the musical or its dance. A musical is not just its choreography, no more than it is just the book, or the music, or the lyrics, or the lighting design – or even a scathing review from a critic. It is a complex, multi-and-interdisciplinary performance type which relies on audiences piecing these often disparate visual and aural cues to create a dynamic performance text. And perhaps, some of these texts might also be provocative enough that an audience might even think a little deeper about the narrative they are consuming.

As we move into an increasingly technology-driven future, and perhaps even towards our own real-world dystopia, the musical genre will doubtless continue to expand in new and currently unknown ways:

Many new musicals are asking many new questions, as artists find their way in this new world. Must scenes in a musical follow a “logical” sequence? Can a musical tell a story out of chronological order? Does it have to tell a linear story at all? Do scenes have to end with songs the way the Rodgers and Hammerstein model did? Do lyrics always have to rhyme? Must a show provide a clear resolution or answer at the end of the evening, or can it end by asking more questions? And further, what can we learn about communicating stories, issues and concepts from television and movies, music videos, talk radio, modern dance, performance art, improvisation, and of course, cyberspace?

(Miller, 2007, p. 236)
The musical comprises an ever-expanding field which still has many areas of study to explore in the future. Musical theatre dance has become so much more than the creative and experimental practices of choreographers and performers, kept alive for more than one hundred years through the ringing applause of global audiences. Cohesive or disruptive, a spectacular showstopper, an integrated dream ballet, or any one of the veritable smorgasbord of choreographic options available to practitioners today – it is time for show dance to be recognised as the entertaining, engaging, fascinating art form that it is, with all of the critical attention it has been lacking. In the words of Kislan (and in a somewhat prescient echo of the lyrics for ‘A Musical’ from *Something Rotten!*): “if so, the future will be bright – if unpredictable” (Kislan, 1987, p. 164).
APPENDICES

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations
Annotated 2084 Script
Choreographic Notes
Review of 2084
Bibliography
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

1984: refers specifically to the 2013 stage adaptation of George Orwell’s seminal science fiction novel. When the novel is referenced within this exegesis it is referred to by its original title, Nineteen Eighty-Four.


Backstage musical: a sub-genre of musical theatre wherein the plot revolves around the performance of a play, often a musical.

Book/libretto: the written form of a musical theatre show, usually comprising of the lyrics and dialogue.

Creator: used interchangeably with the word practitioner within this thesis to indicate professionals working in the field including composers, lyricists, librettists, directors, choreographers, and performers.

Diegetic: derived from the word diegesis which translates from the original Greek, ‘I narrate’ and generally used in film studies. In a musical theatre context, it usually relates to the narrative function of a song or dance routine, specifically a performance within the performance.

Doubled time: a suggested framework for analysing the relationship between libretto and number, specifically the moment where a character moves between staged movement to dancing, or from dialogue to singing. See (McMillin, 2006)

Dream ballet: a common feature of musicals during the 1930s to the 1950s, these extended dance sequences were most often utilised to explore the psychological state of a character.

Gesamtkunstwerk: a German term which translates to ‘total work of art’. Coined by Richard Wagner, it supports the idea that all aspects of an Operatic production should be designed to co-exist and complement each other.

Integration: a means of identifying how amalgamated the song and dance numbers are within the plot of a musical. A fully integrated number is usually understood to advance plot, character, or both.

Librettist: also known as the book-writer. This person is responsible for all written elements within a musical theatre script, namely the dialogue scenes although they can sometimes include the lyrics.

Music theatre: Within this thesis I have utilised the term ‘music theatre’ to encompass a wide breadth of performative genres encompassing opera (and derive genres including ballad opera, operetta etcetera) and musical theatre. It also includes other performance forms which use musico-dramatic elements (including dance) as formalised dramatic conventions but are not necessarily recognised as ‘theatre’.

New musical comedy: a term I coined for a sub-genre of the contemporary musical which utilises codes and conventions reminiscent of early musical comedies and reinterprets them through a contemporary lens. The major
differentiation between musical comedies and ‘new’ musical comedies is of course the time period in which they were written and first performed (the twentieth and twenty-first century respectively) but also that the latter specifically uses conventions to create comedy, pleasure and entertainment, as well as to play on audience nostalgia for the ‘Golden age’ of musical theatre. Examples might include: *The Producers, Something Rotten!*

**Non-diegetic:** a song or dance routine which can be seen to contribute to the dramatic or theatrical aspects of a musical but which does not directly advance the narrative or plot.

**Number:** a song and/or dance routine. Usually seen as distinct from the libretto.

**OWC:** A shortened version of ‘One World Chorus’ used in reference to the creative artefact 2084.

**Practitioner:** used interchangeably with the word creator within this thesis to indicate professionals working in the field including composers, lyricists, librettists, directors, choreographers, and performers.

**Pre-prise:** a term coined by my collaborator Sarah Courtis who was the lyricist and book writer of 2084. A pre-prise is a short musical or lyrical motif which is introduced and then developed into a full song later in the piece. ‘I Remember’ has two short pre-prises in act one of 2084 before the song is performed in its entirety in act two.

**RE:** A shortened version of ‘Rebel Ensemble’ used in reference to the creative artefact 2084. Used interchangeably within this thesis with the term ‘Rebel’.

**Revisal:** a new mounting of a musical theatre text that usually involves substantial revisions to one or all of the original production elements. Most often the book, choreography, production design, orchestrations.

**Revival:** a new mounting of a musical theatre text. Sometimes includes minor revisions to production elements. Most often the book, choreography, production design, orchestrations.

**Show dance:** any kind of dance style (or styles) which might be utilised in a musical theatre setting. Often refers to specific forms such as precision, tap and toe dancing, ballet, modern, as well as more specific movement idioms such as Bob Fosse. Used interchangeably within this thesis with the term ‘musical theatre dance’.
2084: A Musical

Written and Directed by
Sarah Courtis

Composed by
Nick Choo

Choreographed by
Ellin Sears
SYNOPSIS

It's 2084, and ongoing violence and uncertainty has led to the One World Corporation (OWC) implementing a series of memory wipes to keep the people under control. Only Roberta, the leader of the corporation, retains her memories. The Voice of Orwell (the puppet master who implemented the wipes) seeks to blackmail her using her love for her daughter Julia. Roberta is aided in her tasks by Felicity, the face and voice of the corporation, and her loyal assistant Charrington who has been irreparably damaged through repeated memory erases. The head of propaganda is Ian, inspired by the character Winston Smith from Nineteen Eighty-Four. He is a diligent worker for One World but also feels a strange connection to Will, the head of security and law.

These characters all revolve in some way around our protagonist Julia, inspired by the character of the same name from Nineteen Eighty-Four. Before the memory wipes she was a performer and freedom fighter, committed to bringing down One World with the help of Felicity, Ian and Will and the other rebels. Due to the removal of their memories, these characters struggle to parse out their relationships, particularly when the memory wipe technology begins to malfunction. A small band of freedom fighters wreak havoc at the celebrations for Memory Day, demanding answers about the past they cannot remember.

When Roberta offers them a chance to learn the truth about the memory wipes at the next Memory Day celebrations, the rebellion grudgingly agrees to stop their violence, but Julia is still desperate to discover the truth. She joins the preparation for the Memory Day performance and attempts to reconnect with Felicity before an accident sees her rediscover her memories. Unsure who she can reach out to, she remembers that Ian had protected her when he found her with a banned copy of Nineteen Eighty-Four. When Will discovers that they are moving against the corporation he is quick to do his duty and reports them. Julia is captured and confronts her mother Roberta about her role in the memory wipes. Meanwhile, Will recovers his memories and is horrified to discover that he has sent Ian to his death, not realising that they were lovers before the wipe. His attempt to expose the corporation is waylaid by the Assistant who has gone insane and plans to detonate a bomb at the Memory Day celebrations.
Ultimately, the corporation proves far too powerful. The Assistant is subdued and killed by Felicity and then Julia is memory wiped, as is Ian. In despair, Will murders Roberta and then kills himself too rather than live with the memory of what he has done. As the story closes the ghosts of Roberta, Will and the Assistant watch on as Ian and Julia are assimilated back into the ranks of the OWC and The Voice of Orwell takes Felicity under their wing. As the corporation begins to set its new regime in place, the date ticks backwards. The familiar landscape of Nineteen Eighty-Four has been set in motion and we close on an image of the Voice of Orwell tipping Julia’s copy of Nineteen Eighty-Four into a bonfire. The story has come full circle.

**CAST**

**Roberta** – One of the leaders in the One World Corporation. Dedicated mother, torn between doing what she thinks is right and the love of her family.

**Julia** – An ex-dancer, freedom fighter and Roberta’s daughter. She stands up for what she believes in no matter the cost.

**Ian** – Head of propaganda for the One World Corporation. He has lost his sense of self and is afraid to go against the tide until pushed.

**Will** – Follows the law with intense tenacity until he discovers that he has something to lose.

**Felicity** – The face of the One World Corporation. Complicit in the actions of the regime, she is unwilling to sacrifice current happiness and comfort for an uncertain future.

**Voice of Orwell** – The embodiment of the One World Corporation, pushing for total control above all else.

**Assistant/Charrington** – A lost soul who has spent too much time caught between sides. Possibly suffering PTSD, it’s hard to tell what remains of the man.
# SONG LIST

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<td>6. Spiders (Contraband) – Ian, Julia</td>
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<td>7. The Plan – Assistant, Will, Ian, Roberta</td>
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<td>8. Love Song for Ian* – Will, Voice of Orwell</td>
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<td>10. The Burning* – Felicity, Will, Ian, Julia, Ensemble</td>
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<td>14. Control – Roberta, Assistant, Ensemble</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Something About You ^ – Felicity, Julia, Ensemble</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I Remember Pre-prise – Julia</td>
<td>0:57:34</td>
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<th>Act Two</th>
<th>Video Time Stamp</th>
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<td>17. See Me – Julia</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Memory Matters – Will, Ian, Julia</td>
<td>1:05:58</td>
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<td>19. Tick Tock – Assistant, Will</td>
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<td>20. I Remember – Roberta, Julia,</td>
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<td>21. Rehearsals Reprise – Assistant, Ensemble</td>
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<td>22. In Your Eyes – Will, Ian, Julia, Roberta, Ensemble</td>
<td>1:24:36</td>
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* The numbers denoted with an asterisk were present in the original workshop of 2084.

^ This number was cut from the final iteration of the performance during the rehearsal period, with the reasons for its excision included in the annotations. It also appears on the official cast recording of 2084.
### ACT ONE

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<th>SCENE 1 – 2082 ROBERTA REMEMBERS: THE MAIN SQUARE</th>
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<td><strong>1. ONE WORLD</strong></td>
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(ROBERTA appears onstage in front of the scrim, alone and isolated by the light. She is agitated, bothered by the wipe band on her temple and twitches a little as if discomfited by it. The music begins with an undercurrent of menacing, but then as the AV shows the dates counting backwards from 2084 to 2082, we see ROBERTA’s memories. The following flashback is a memory she has of watching her daughter JULIA perform at a Gala event two years prior. The number is an overly happy, upbeat/jazzy version of the One World theme that will become FELICITY’s theme later. Performed here in the style of a traditional musical theatre showstopper, this number is little more than corporation propaganda. The girls dance, smiling widely, and unaware of the shift in tone as the curtain lifts. As they dance, the sound of explosions begins to creep into the soundscape and the Rebels, hooded and dark, are silhouetted menacingly behind them. As the dancers begin to repeat the same steps in a loop, Roberta grows increasingly...

< Getting this opening number right was incredibly important because, as Kislan suggests, the first number in a show provides an opportunity to “demonstrate to the audience in physical terms the who, what, when, where, and how of the show to follow” (Kislan, 1987, p. 187). This opening number and the scene which follows were added after the initial workshop we conducted, specifically at my behest. In the workshop we opened with ‘Prologue’, a slow-paced song that I felt was lacking in energy and dynamism. It also failed to introduce the high stakes and conflict of the world, and I wanted the choreography to really start the show with a ‘bang’ (if you’ll pardon the pun).

My exploration of disruption and the subversion of audience expectations through dance is perhaps best exemplified through my construction of this opening sequence. From the very beginning of the show I wanted the audience to be aware that external forces within the world of 2084 were having a profound effect on these characters. The subversion of audience expectations comes not only from the presence of a bouncy tap number in a dystopian musical with strong intertextual links to Nineteen Eighty-Four, but also from the literal physical disruption of the traditional ‘opening showstopper’ not only with an explosion, but also with the death of an ensemble member.

Aside from establishing Roberta, Julia and Felicity as key characters, this number also establishes several key choreographic elements that will be utilised throughout the production including:

- The use of dance as a disruptive force, as well as the subversion of audience expectations through the disruption of the number from outside forces – as evidenced by the explosion at the end of this number.
- The introduction of major themes including surveillance, subjugation and control, and memory/choice. The placement of the sequinned eye motif on the back of the leotards was a recurrent visual symbol of surveillance, while the use of the scrim provides a barrier between past and present. In this instance, Roberta is unable to change the past, despite the scrim being lifted.
agitated. She knows what is coming, but the dancers onstage do not. The Rebels stride towards the dancers and mass in the centre of them to form... AN EXPLOSION! The Rebels embody the explosion using their hands and bodies, becoming both shrapnel and shockwave. The music reaches a peak as the dancers are engulfed. One of them turns to see a rogue piece of shrapnel moving towards her. She falls to the floor, dead, struck in the temple. The lights strobe and debris fall as the noise of the explosion slowly fades into ringing silence. There are screams, sobs and chaos as the dancers struggle to their feet and scramble to escape the carnage. Julia moves to the girl who was hit by the shrapnel intent on helping, but quickly realises that her friend is dead.

As JULIA cries over the body of her fallen comrade, FELICITY re-enters and stops short.)

FELICITY. (Gently): Julia.
(JULIA continues to sob.)
FELICITY. (A little more forcefully): Julia.
(JULIA finally looks up, tearfully. FELICITY offers her hand.)
FELICITY. (Gently): She’s gone. Leave her.

in order to allow the audience to see the dancers. She is lost in memory, the dancers almost like ghosts of memory.

- The first use of circles and militaristic straight lines is evident here in the patterning. When the Rebels appear they begin in a straight line, a stark juxtaposition to OWC dancers who jump and spin around a central group in much the same way that the ensemble will dance around the bonfires in ‘The Burning’ and ‘Big Brother is Watching You’.

- Choreographic allusions to traditional show dance from practitioners like Gower Champion and Bob Fosse are evident in the presence of tap dancing, and the use of bowler hats.

- The use of repetition in the choreography is due in part to the limited training of the dancers but is also intended to indicate a change in the passage of time as the bomb manifests in the form of the Rebel Ensemble. This same technique is used later during ‘In Your Eyes’.

- The depersonalisation of the ensemble here, specifically using them to embody an explosion is one that I return to at various times throughout my choreography. The role of the shrapnel is one that I have already spoken about in Chapter Five, but it is perhaps worth reiterating here that my inspiration for the explosions here and in ‘In Your Eyes’ came from Hamilton and the role of The Bullet.

< As mentioned above, this scene and ‘One World’ were later additions to the script and the concept for these opening scenes were developed as part of my ongoing creative collaboration on the script with lyricist/librettist Sarah. This scene is particularly important because of the narrative and visual parallels it offers to the final scene where Roberta perishes at the hands of Will. Here, Julia has a strong emotional response to the death of her friend and there is a camaraderie between herself and Felicity. In the final scene before ‘Big Brother is Watching You’ Julia has been freshly memory wiped and therefore has no emotional connection to Roberta at all. Similarly, Felicity is cold and impersonal where here she is warm and empathetic.
(JULIA does. She allows FELICITY to guide her out by the shoulders, pausing only once more to glance back at the body. Suddenly, the VOICE OF ORWELL appears. ROBERTA cries out but time, and the AV, fast forwards to 2084, the One World Corporation ENSEMBLE jostles ROBERTA. She ends up isolated.)

[VOICE OF ORWELL]
The circle turns again
[ENSEMBLE]
Our future is our past
There was no choice for us
There’s just the greater good

(The VOICE OF ORWELL looms over ROBERTA.)

VOICE OF ORWELL. Are you ready now Roberta, to fully commit?

ROBERTA. Don’t make me lose her. She is my child.

VOICE OF ORWELL. There are bigger things at stake here than family, or do you need reminding just what we are fighting for?

ROBERTA. Please, if she dies, I couldn’t bear it. If she dies. I want to forget. Make me forget. Make me forget. I don’t want any part of this anymore.

< The word circle which is the second word sung within the libretto is a recurring motif throughout 2084 and refers in part to the cyclical nature of the narrative and how it dovetails into the beginning of Nineteen Eighty-Four. It is also one of the reasons that I utilised circles so frequently in my patterning and choreography, linking the visual and aural symbolism to enhance guiding motifs across multiple levels of the production design.
VOICE OF ORWELL. Now why would I let you forget, when making you remember is so much more satisfying?

SCENE 2 – 2084 THE BEGINNING AND THE END: THE MAIN SQUARE
(The VOICE OF ORWELL gestures and the ENSEMBLE rushes forward towards ROBERTA, who mechanically joins their formation with a pained expression. A dancer from the memory twirls across the back of the stage and ROBERTA briefly reaches out towards them before she is engulfed by the ensemble and brought in line.)

2. PROLOGUE

[VOICE OF ORWELL]
The choice for mankind lies between
Freedom and happiness
And for the great bulk of mankind
Happiness is better
[OWC]
The choices we make are reflected in the stories we’ve told
We become our own demons
The thing that we fear the most to behold

< We see here the first use of one of four wheeled platforms. These simple set pieces allowed for certain characters to rise above the ensemble and were also instrumental during the chase scene in ‘Tick Tock’.

< The quick costume change between ‘One World’ and ‘Prologue’/’The Celebration’ presented an issue for the cast member who was supposed to perform this small choreographic beat. It was cut after our first dress rehearsal.

< The heavy drum line in this song is echoed in the heavy, grounded movements of the OWC. The entrance of the OWC ensemble sees them dragging their feet, almost as though they are part of a chain gang. They are physically weighted down by the influence of the corporation – even if they are not aware of it. Their movement style which is introduced in this number is measured, militaristic, and even robotic at times. The patterning echoes this, primarily using straight lines as well as symmetrical diagonals to frame the performance space, drawing the audiences gaze to the main characters as they step briefly out from the ensemble.
[IAN]
What choice can you make, when you expect to fall?

[ROBERTA]
When faced with bad alternatives, there’s no choice at all

[WILL]
You try to live with honour, but you are just too small

[JULIA & FELICITY]
What separates right from good lies in what you can recall

[VOICE OF ORWELL]
In 2081: the war was nearly won
In 2082: the hate just grew and grew
In 2083: we lost humanity
Its 2084: What do you stand for?

[IAN]
Safety

[ROBERTA]
Security

[JULIA]
Righteousness

[WILL]
Honesty

< The exact quality of the military precision that I was attempting to achieve in this number (and others) was hindered by the training and ability of our performers. Although they never quite achieved the sharp type of precision that I envisioned, this short choreographic segment still gives a sense of what I was attempting to achieve with the movement of the OWC and shows the influence of military style drills on my choreography. The use of the snare drum here also highlights the military feel and was an element of the re-orchestration that I specifically requested after the original workshop.
[FELICITY]  
Worthiness  
[OWC]  
The sum of your parts does not make a greater whole  

[VOICE OF ORWELL]  
Its 2084 and we celebrate the eve of memory  

[FELICITY]  
One world. One voice. One freedom. One choice.  

[FELICITY & OWC]  
One people, united under one banner of faith  

(The Company forms a line mechanically, fully under the control of One World Corporation. The VOICE OF ORWELL stands above the action. The AV shows a picture of FELICITY looking heroic with the One World slogan underneath her.)

3. THE CELEBRATION  
(The dancers energetically perform a dance of loss before forming ranks to dance together. The AV flashes to a

< Here we see for the first time the magnetic pull of Felicity, the face and voice of the corporation as the OWC cluster around her in a protective circle. They huddle as if for warmth and bask in the security she offers. This peace will be disrupted by the physical presence of the Rebel Ensemble (RE) in the following number, which follows immediately after ‘Prologue’.>

< The music for this number has more energy and drive behind it, a shift away from the reverent, hymn-like ‘Prologue’. The choreography naturally follows, especially when the Rebels appear and work to disrupt the Memory Day celebrations. The Rebels move in more chaotic, organic patterning, unlike the OWC who conform to the straight lines and circles that have already been established in ‘Prologue’.>
‘Celebrate Memory Day’ caption, the characters all join theENSEMBLE, silhouetted at the back.
During the action the OWC and REBELS interact, showingthe differences between the freedom fighters and the sheep.)

[OWC]
On this the eve of our rebirth
We ask the blessing of a higher power
Grant us the grace we have found this year
And forever after
We are what we know
Though years our bodies may have felt
As children our minds are again
All we have known is one cycle of the Earth around the sun

[REBELS]
Slavers! Tyrants! Thieves of identity!

[OWC]
Grant us the courage to serve our Corporation

[OWC ctd.]
Grant us joy in all we do; we trust you!
We know you will protect us from the past
One World Corporation we give to you all that we know

< More lyrical allusions to cycles/circles.

< Although the number of Rebels is small, they make up for this in theirviolence, both in words and deeds. Their movement reflects this, and thephysical menace they present here is a direct juxtaposition to the protectivecircles that are about to be formed by the OWC.

< The circular pattern formed by the OWC here was originally a picket line,not dissimilar to the riot scenes in Billy Elliot. After the original workshop, Ialtered the choreography from straight lines to circles in order to betterutilise the narrow width of the Nexus stage and the sightlines of theaudience. Ultimately, I feel that the original choreographic concept was farmore confronting from the audience perspective. I would be interested inre-exploring the patterning in this number in any future iterations.
[REBELS]
Monsters!
[OWC]
Shelter us!
[REBELS]
Persecutors!
[OWC]
Keep us safe!
(Overlapping)

[REBELS]
Death to the traitors!
[OWC]
We will remain true!

[REBELS]
Release our brothers and
sisters

[COMPANY]
Nothing can sway us from this path!

[REBELS]
To reveal the truth

[OWC]
Remain loyal and good
[REBELS]
To free our brethren

[OWC]
To resist temptation

[COMPANY]
Resolve all this conflict by the end of Twenty Eighty-Four!

(A member of the REBEL ENSEMBLE climbs up onto the set and attempts to assassinate ROBERTA. She is captured by WILL and a lackey, ripped from her vantage point struggling and screaming. On ROBERTA’s nod she is memory wiped and dragged offstage. The AV shows her screaming face and the Rebels watch on in horror as the music resumes.)

[ROBERTA]
You who have given us your faith
Enjoy the freedom of a fresh start
The joy and protection of the Corporation
A governmental body spanning earth
(Overlapping)

[FEMALE OWC] [MALE OWC]
Stay in line Stay loyal and true

< Another instance of dance being disrupted by external forces. In order to avoid this scene coming across as melodramatic or camp, we chose to have this short scene play in near silence to highlight the horrifying nature of the actions taking place.

< The contrast between the OWC and the RE is stark here. The OWC fold easily into line (again, the movements echo key words within the lyrics) while the Rebels escape in order to regroup for their final attack at the end.
We know we’ll be cared for if we do

Conform to your life

Forget about probable, uncontrollable, unknowable strife
And thank the Corporation for protection, conservation
Of the peace that they have now begun anew

There’s a lot to be thankful for

We’re alive and we are fed

Thanks to the Corporation and to Orwell, though he’s dead

Thanks to Orwell we’re not dead!
Every day we watch the news
And we thank George because we are alive
And to uphold his doctrine we shall strive

Workers of the Truth Sector pledge yourselves to Orwell

< This is the first onstage interaction we see between Will and Ian, visually linking these two characters in much the same way as both Julia and Felicity, and Roberta and the Voice of Orwell already have been.

< Composer Nick Choo often experiments with unusual time signatures. The change in rhythm during this section was particularly complicated to choreograph to. It was consequently difficult to teach the resulting choreography to the cast. This is one of several sections of the score that I would have preferred to have had more time to develop in collaboration with Nick. There is another below.

< This is the first appearance of the One World salute which appears throughout the blocking and choreography within 2084. I wanted a simple, clear gesture that would be instantly recognisable to the audience. The symbolism of the raised fist is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.
[OWC]
We pledge ourselves to Orwell
[ROBERTA]
Swear you will always be true
[OWC]
We swear
[ROBERTA]
With each revision of our sacred book
Follow the path which Orwell took
Ignorance is –
[OWC]
Strength!
[ROBERTA]
War is truly –
[OWC]
Peace!
[ROBERTA]
Freedom’s really –
[OWC]
Slavery! And God is power
We gratefully thank the Corporation

< We see here the dissemination of propaganda flyers to the OWC by key members of the corporation. This is an important visual component that highlights some of our primary themes, including control and surveillance.

< The gestures the OWC make here are revisited several times throughout the choreography. These movements are always linked to One World, most notably in the finale ‘Big Brother is Watching You’.

< The change in rhythm in this section is like that of above section which I have already noted. The choreography once again reflects this change in rhythm with syncopated, disjointed movements. This is a technique that is evident throughout the choreography and is often used as a physical manifestation of the underlying tension in those who have had their memories wiped.
[OWC ctd.]
For protection and conservation
Of the peace they have begun anew
[REBELS]
Slavery!
[OWC]
It has ever been thus
[REBELS]
Persecutors!
[OWC]
The Corporation we trust!
[COMPANY]
Nothing can ever sway us from our path now!
[OWC]
The doctrine of Orwell is now and forevermore our worldview!

(REBELS rush through the OWC. The ENSEMBLE disperses, leaving ROBERTA alone. IAN is carrying documents, approaches ROBERTA and salutes.)

< Although this number has all but ended by the time the Rebels enter to disrupt it, the choreography continues the trend of dance being disrupted by external forces that has already been established in 'One World'.>
SCENE 3 – 2084 DREAMS AND SPIDERS: A STREET 
BELOW ROBERTA’S OFFICE
(The AV depicts a sign saying ‘Welcome to the Truth Sector’)
IAN. Comrade Roberta, an… interesting first wipe day.
ROBERTA. The dissenters will be dealt with, Comrade Ian.
Especially if your work on the propaganda machine is successful.
IAN. Please, I prefer the phrase ‘creative truths’.
After all, with no past to recall, all new knowledge must be the truth.
ROBERTA. As long as it is our truth Comrade. New flyers about the riots already?
IAN. Yes ma’am. The face of One World Corporation is ready to spread the message of unity. For in unity—
BOTH. There is strength.
ROBERTA. Excellent work.
IAN. To think a year ago this world was divided and rudderless, now war and terror are only a myth read about in old books. Why with only a year of memories, we are a world
IAN ctd. of babes ready to be sung asleep by the sweet nurse that is One World.

ROBERTA. You are beginning to sound like one of those old poets, one who I believe is on the banned books list.

IAN. My apologies ma’am, it is my job to read as much as I can from our past in order to shape our future.

ROBERTA. Just be careful you don’t delve too far Ian, you might not like what you dig up.

(Enter ASSISTANT.)

ASSISTANT. Excuse me ma’am but they are asking for you.

It’s regarding the Memory Day riots.

ROBERTA. (Snorting:) Who comes up with these names? Memory Day, it’s a little ironic don’t you think?

ASSISTANT. As you say ma’am.

ROBERTA. (Sighing:) I see you lost your sense of humour with your memory. I will be there soon my sweet robot.

(ASSISTANT exits. IAN and ROBERTA nod to one another, moving to their respective offices. A member of the REBEL ENSEMBLE enters and attempts to vandalize one of the screens. IAN calls out to them, and they run off stage.)

< Once again, the Rebels are aligned with physical violence, this time through the staged movement.
4. DREAMS THAT CAN'T BE MINE

[ROBERTA]
I spend my days hoping
That the choices I have made were not in vain
Denying my fears from another time, another place
And I often wonder
Just what sort of life might have been mine?
If instead of dancing this dream I could live, oh live
For out there, the world breathes the open air
While I sit here waiting, day after day
If I could, I would join that world, instead I create the past...away.

[IAN]
Day by day I wonder
Where is that piece to fill this void?
I know I should be happy that I have a place

[IAN]
[ROBERTA]
If I dared I would speak out
I am chained here, we all
On what I have found inside
their tomes
Those like me can't wander
very far

< In earlier drafts – including the workshop – this number had members of the ensemble dancing in the background. Ultimately it was decided by all members of the creative team that having dance during this section was not only unnecessary, but it would likely detract from the song which was important for a deepening understanding of the characters of Roberta and Ian. The lack of dancing here allows for greater focus on individual characters, and also helps in the flow between this number and Julia's solo, 'I Remember Pre-prise 1' which is next.
[IAN ctd.]  [ROBERTA ctd.]
But still I know they will find  But when that screen of
me wherever I roam, oh  smoke clears here I am.
home  Here I am!

[ROBERTA & IAN]
For out there the world waits
Calling me, while I sit here lonely
Killing time
So I stay, working that world away
Dreaming dreams that can't be mine

[ROBERTA]
So the world just sleeps and dreams
What it's been told to dream
While I'm dying for the chance
For a dream all of my own

[ROBERTA & IAN]
I'm in here rotting in my cell
Inhaling the fumes of a world now felled
No one knows that it was built
On the shattered dreams they held
[IAN]
Day comes
[ROBERTA]
Night ends
[ROBERTA & IAN]
I’m awake
Dreaming dreams that can’t be mine

(IAN sighs and exits. Two members of the REBEL ENSEMBLE stumble across the stage, drunk. They spot JULIA as she enters and heckle her as they pass. ROBERTA is heading towards her meeting when she nearly crashes into JULIA. She is shocked and reaches towards her before remembering herself. The VOICE OF ORWELL is watching.)

ROBERTA. Julia?

[JULIA]
Excuse me madam, I didn’t see you there

ROBERTA. That’s all right.

[ROBERTA]
Off you go, the streets aren’t safe and curfew is
[ROBERTA ctd.]
starting soon

[JULIA]
Orwell Protect you ma'am

[ROBERTA]
And you...Comrade

(ROBERTA exits while JULIA watches her with a quizzical
look on her face. She crosses the street, only to notice a flyer
for the show she had been in during 2082, under a ripped
propaganda poster. She takes it down and during the
following number she puzzles over it, slowly moving to dance
with the poster.)

5. I REMEMBER PRE-PRISE ONE

[JULIA]
So familiar, and yet not
Could this be, what I forgot?
If I once danced, full of joy
Is their sordid past just a ploy?
Surely not

< The choreographic process for the dance section of this number was a
truly collaborative artistic process undertaken with the actress who played
Julia. It involved a series of one-on-one sessions in the performance space
where we worked from some basic ideas about Julia's thought process
during this scene. Despite her minimal dance training, Deirdre had a natural
earnestness to her which worked beautifully for the character of Julia. As
such, the movement was devised partly through joint improvisation, and
guided by some basic choreographic concepts and scaffolding that I had
drawn up beforehand to ensure that the ensuing choreography was
dynamic and utilised as much space as possible. As a choreographer,
Deirdre's natural personality and demeanour were tremendously important
to the construction of this choreography. This number was also important
for my praxis because it was the first choreographic concept that arose out
[JULIA ctd.]

If this was the life I knew
Why are memories so taboo?
What’s the harm in dancing?
It’s not political…
I can’t miss curfew

(She goes to leave, then looks around furtively before starting to dance with the flyer. As she dances and experiments with the joy of movement, ROBERTA emerges and watches her sadly. She leaves before the end of the song. The wistful music slows and cuts off as IAN and WILL enter deep in discussion. They notice her and step apart from one another.)

WILL. You there, why are you out so late? It’s nearly curfew.

JULIA. My apologies Comrade, I was delayed by Madam Roberta.

WILL. There’s no excuse, I will need your ID number.

IAN. Will, if she was with the director then surely you can cut her some slack?

< Within the structure of 2084 this is the only solo dance number, setting it apart from the many ensemble and group numbers, and highlighting the fact that this number is the only time that a character freely expresses themselves through movement. Originally, this number was meant to be more explorative of the physical effects of the wipe technology, a theme that runs throughout the choreography but was never fully realised. This theme is explored more sub-textually than overtly in the finished product.>
WILL. You know the rules, you helped write them.
IAN. Rules are made to be bent, that’s what you said once…
WILL. I think I would recall saying something so preposterous.
IAN. Perhaps not…
(They look at each other intensely.)
JULIA. If you are both done, can I go now?
(They break apart flustered, having forgotten she was there)
WILL. Don’t make me regret this.
(He leaves. IAN watches him go thoughtfully.)
JULIA. Hey, are you ok?
IAN. Right, yes, sorry I was only… what did you say your name was again?
JULIA. I didn’t and it’s Julia. Try not to forget it.
IAN. Well it would be the first sign of old age.
(They laugh awkwardly, it’s a weak joke)
IAN. Right well one of us has to leave first.
JULIA. After you.
IAN. No I… are you hiding something?
JULIA. No!
IAN. A poster... from before the wipe.

JULIA. It just seems so familiar, and it has some sort of paper stuck to the back, look.

6. SPIDERS (CONTRABAND)
(The ENSEMBLE swing silently and creepily in the shadows wearing white masks. During the dialogue break they retreat and glisten creepily in the shadows.)

[IAN]
This world is fragile
It hangs on a delicate thread
If we don’t toe the line I fear
We would wind up worse than dead
I don’t care how innocuous
This paper seems to you
All they need is a shred of proof
And you’ve lost all you thought you knew
Spiders spinning webs for us
Tasty morsels, they play with us
I pray for us
You’d better hope you don’t get caught

< Although the choreography for this number was simple, it proved an audience favourite. This number was most cited amongst survey respondents and was also commented on by audience members who gave verbal feedback after the performances. The three-mask dancers were striking and visually effective, evoking an unsettling sense of the characters of Ian and Julia being watched. Although it is difficult to see the performers due to the quality of the recording and the dimness of the lighting, the dancers spend most of the number menacingly encircling Ian and Julia. They are a physical manifestation of the culture of surveillance within the world of 2084 as well as a visual representation of the characters fear of the corporation, which almost borders on paranoia here. For a more detailed analysis of this number and specific audience responses please see Chapter Five. For images of the inspiration for this number, please see the Appendices.
[JULIA]
I see me dancing
And floating across the room
A woman, she is laughing
She sings a haunting tune

[IAN]
Enough! You don’t know
Any more than I
What all our lives were like
Before the wipe of last July

[JULIA]
I could be dancing

[IAN]
No you must be rid of this
Burn the paper thoroughly and – wait, what is this?

IAN. ‘Corporation plots: memory wipe a bid for control.’

JULIA. So it’s true what I’ve feared. They said it was for our own good that we forget the horrors of the ’70s. They said we chose this by popular vote. If they’re lying…
IAN. Hush. You never know who’s listening. Besides, this isn’t proof. We write similar jargon in the truth sector.

JULIA. Propaganda you mean.

IAN. It’s basically the same thing.

JULIA. If you squint really hard.

IAN. It doesn’t matter. What does matter is that this on its own means nothing, but is still too dangerous to keep. There is a burning day coming. You know what to do.

JULIA. Surely you can’t just go on meekly writing whatever they tell you to now?

IAN. What choice do I have? As far as I know, it’s the right thing to do. Have hope. Truth has a way of making itself known.

JULIA. But –

IAN. Find me some proof.

[IAN & JULIA]

Spiders spinning webs for us

Tasty morsels they play with us

(Overlapping)

[IAN] [JULIA]

I pray for us I will keep dancing

< Although it is difficult to see the exact movements of the dancers in the video, this section does contain a slightly clearer image of the hand motions that I utilised within the choreography for this number. This includes circular and spiral hand motions as well as smooth push-pull movements that made it seem as though the masks on their hands were moving in and out of the shadows.
For now we must stall

(Siren calls for curfew.)

IAN.

Go.

SCENE 4 – 2084 PLOTS AND PLANS: THE TRUTH

SECTOR OFFICES

(Lights fade up on the stage, revealing ROBERTA and the VOICE OF ORWELL.)

VOICE OF ORWELL.

Roberta.

ROBERTA.

Sir.

VOICE OF ORWELL.

You disappoint me.

ROBERTA.

The rebels grow stronger; I fear they have found a way to remember.

VOICE OF ORWELL.

They do not concern me. It is your relationship with your daughter.

ROBERTA.

Julia? But I haven’t, that is to say… I have followed every rule and not revealed to her our bond.

VOICE OF ORWELL.

Be sure it remains that way. I would hate to see you both on opposite sides again, or for any accidents to happen.
(Images of JULIA in pain and bombs exploding on the AV)

ROBERTA. You can count on me sir, there’s no need to resort to threats.

VOICE OF ORWELL. Make sure of it. And get those rebels back under our control. Remember, I am always watching.

7. THE PLAN

(The morning bell calls the populace to work and IAN is met by the ASSISTANT. The ENSEMBLE enters and set up their workstations. JULIA is late. She shares a look with IAN before WILL enters and they return to their work. ROBERTA is watching from her office. Propaganda documents flash onto the screens.)

[ASSISTANT]
Did you hear?

[WILL]
Have you seen?

[IAN]
In recent history, has there been such a terrible scene?

< As discussed in my exegesis, ‘The Plan’ was inspired by several other musical numbers including; ‘I Wanna Be A Producer’ from The Producers, ‘I Want/She’s So Heavy’ from Across the Universe (2007) and ‘Say It To Me Now’ from Once. Because my choreographic concepts relied on the presence of heavy, discordant beats, this was one of the numbers that I prioritised for re-orchestration after the workshop, especially the opening bars. Nick’s original orchestration for this piece was very light and bouncy, not dissimilar to any number of dialogue-heavy songs from Andrew Lloyd-Webber, or his own work on children’s theatre shows. Unfortunately, it just did not fit stylistically with what I was trying to achieve here. Despite his alterations, I still feel that the finished music remains clunky, as does the choreography – perhaps a result of the creative collaboration between myself and Nick Choo not quite matching up in this instance. Despite my reservations about this number, I do feel that the lighter moments within the music and lyrics, mirrored in the small moments of comedy within the choreography and movement (for example the workers eavesdropping, receiving back massages) may have helped to keep the overall tone of the piece from becoming too dark. This is particularly important when we consider the numbers and scenes before and after it; the tension filled ‘Spiders (Contraband)’ and the melancholy ‘Love Song For Ian’.

My desire to use this number as a moment of light in amongst so much tragedy also contributed to my decision to change the patterning and focus of the ensemble in this number. In the workshop, the workers faced forward as they typed. For the final creative artefact, I had originally planned to have
[ASSISTANT]
Those riots yesterday

[WILL]
And the news of unrest

[IAN]
In sectors not far away from us barely suppressed

[WILL]
Right away, we're being put to the test

[ASSISTANT]
You don't think?

[IAN]
I don't know

[WILL]
If they start to show that they remember

It would be a blow

[ASSISTANT]
This whole day, full of twists

[WILL]
I'm struggling

[IAN]
It's troubling to say the least

the backs of the workers to the audience instead; but ultimately, I felt that this depersonalised the ensemble too early in the piece. Of course, ideally this number would have been far more dynamic, with the stationary typists replaced by workers who had tablets in hand and were able to move around the space. This also would have allowed for a slightly more 'science fiction' take on the props used by the propaganda workers, perhaps even swiping propaganda images and edited articles from their devices up onto the monitors. Sadly, we were limited by both our budget — and the theatre space. I would love to re-stage this number to incorporate some of these ideas in the future, perhaps creating a new take on the worker-drone as seen in the shows which served as my primary inspiration cited above.
[ASSISTANT, WILL & IAN]

If the mem’ry chips fail
Our Corporation’s deceased

[ROBERTA]

Gentlemen, no need for dramatics
It’s all in hand, Ian my dear
As the head of propaganda
I want a memoranda
Sent out, to your sections at once
An exercise in morale would be effective
Now we must make this call
To stand corrective
To keep them all in thrall
At least that’s the rationale
We must maintain their dedication
To our world-wide nation
Show them that we care
Give them a task to unify them
Re-beautify the memorial event
Don’t disappoint me with this Ian
Your record this year has been shoddy at best

< A less than subtle gesture from the OWC here indicates at least a sub-conscious awareness of the memory chip technology. A similar gesture is present in 'The Celebration', drawing the audience’s attention to the technology to ensure that they understand the link between the devices and the memory wipes.

< Roberta’s entrance sees a change in tone from the worry and concern of her underlings, and the worker drones in the truth sector who have been bashing away at their keyboards for the better part of the number. Her presence brings a certain amount of relief to Ian, Will, and Charrington, and this is visually represented by the ensemble being allowed a break and receiving physical therapy at their desks. This was also a fun, visual joke that suggests although the corporation is corrupt, they are still attempting to look after their workers’ physical wellbeing. This type of unexpected juxtaposition was one of several ways we tried to subtly challenge audience expectations of the world within the play. Good and bad are not so easily delineated, with many characters – and even the corporation – operating within a morally grey area.
[IAN]
I am yours to command
I'm your right hand man
None is more loyal than I
They shall know of our might!
I'll prove only we know what is right
I am one with the only light!

(WILL and IAN step to one side, ROBERTA and ASSISTANT move.)

[WILL]
Watch yourself Mr. Winston
Any slip on your part could be dangerous
If I were you I'd provide more to prove your worth
You haven't published a single thing in nearly a month
You wouldn't want to be thought disloyal
You know what happened to the last guy in your place

[IAN]
I will prove myself I swear
I'll create an event that will be deemed beyond compare
Unforgettable! But wait, while we're both alone
I feel as though there's something here that I'm missing

< The change in the rhythm of the music is reflected here by a change in the typing of the OWC workers. A second rhythm shift can also be seen below.

< The movements of the ensemble are utilised here once again to mirror the emotional state of the leads. As Ian reaches out for Will, the workers also search in vain for something they have lost/misplaced. Some even move to take their headsets off, a visual symbol that would suggest them breaking out of the mindless stupors they have fallen into under the thrall of the corporation. Ultimately, Will disrupts this moment of instinctual connection between himself and Ian, and the ensemble goes back to the task at hand.
[IAN ctd.]
It’s unclear but we’re connected in some way
    I see you there
    [WILL]
    Don’t you dare!
There are no more warnings Winston
    Don’t dredge up the past
    Go create something new
    Play your part and get out there do what you do
    Make history, but don’t live it again

(IAN exits and WILL re-joins ROBERTA and ASSISTANT.)

[ROBERTA]
    Keep an eye on him Will
    And several other suspects
    Those with potential of mutinous thoughts
    Would you believe he once led the rebellion?
    [ASSISTANT]
    I’m sure all our pasts would be surprising
    But that’s quite a stretch even so ma’am
    [WILL]
    Who are the others?
[WILL ctd.]
As head of security I must know

[ROBERTA]
The targets of concern are Ian Winston, Julia O’Brien and Felicity Goldstein

[WILL]
Felicity Goldstein? The Face of the Corporation?

[ROBERTA]
The one and the same

[WILL]
Well I’m sure you know what you’re on about
But you must admit it’s unexpected

[ROBERTA]
They’re a fit from before the wipe
They were instrumental
To the detrimental Rebellion of ’83
That made the wipes a clear necessity

(A whistle/bell signals the end of the work shift.)

[WILL]
You can count on me to crush the lot

< These characters are subtly highlighted here through a combination of lighting and specific movements juxtaposed against the stillness of the rest of the ensemble. This is one of several examples of the juxtaposition between movement and stillness that formed part of the theoretical background to my praxis.
[WILL ctd.]
If there’s even a hint of dissention

[ROBERTA]
Good. Now run along. Oh and Will?
Keep them in line
I look to you, do what you must
For the greater good
We must be careful too

(The ENSEMBLE moves off in slow motion. IAN tries to catch WILL’s attention but fails. ROBERTA exits towards her office while the ASSISTANT and VOICE OF ORWELL stand above the street. WILL walks into the street solemnly.)

8. LOVE SONG FOR IAN

[WILL]
There’s something wrong with this world
Something missing from my life…
I feel I should care
That I’m being used…
I can’t remember your face
Yet I know that you are there

< Once again the ensemble responds to the change in rhythm, moving only on the beats that punctuate Roberta’s lines. This is in direct juxtaposition to the way that they exit momentarily.

< In the workshop version, the ensemble exited this number in slow motion. In the final iteration seen here, the movements of the ensemble better reflect the shift from the upbeat orchestration of ‘The Plan’ to the melancholy of ‘Love Song For Ian’. Although they pack up with a great deal of energy at first, as the songs dovetail into each other, their movements eventually slow. The use of dance to indicate a manipulation of the passage of time has already been seen in ‘One World’, and briefly during ‘The Plan’. It is also present in later numbers, most notably when flashbacks are utilised in ‘See Me’ and ‘I Remember’, as well as ‘In Your Eyes’ which takes place primarily within a suspended moment of time. Here it also indicates a change in location as Will exits the truth sector and begins to head home for the evening. This moment highlights both his isolation, and his loneliness.
I see empty space… there’s nothing there
It’s just another day in my personal hell.

(WILL exits and the VOICE OF ORWELL stalks over to the ASSISTANT.)

[VOICE OF ORWELL]
The choices we make
Are reflected in the stores we’ve told

VOICE OF ORWELL. Comrade Charrington, your services are required again. Time to wake up from this short sleep and take care of things. We want no more disturbances.

(VOICE OF ORWELL connects to the ASSISTANT’s memory device and uploads a personality to it.)

VOICE OF ORWELL. Watch them all, quietly. Oh, and keep Roberta on track, I fear she is letting her personal connections get in her way.

(The ASSISTANT takes a moment to adjust before saluting smartly and marching off.)
SCENE 5 – 2084 UNREST: THE TRUTH SECTOR SQUARE

(A new day in the sector square. The OWC Ensemble is placidly on work break. They are reading the flyers from the previous day. WILL supervises. The AV has returned to the ‘Welcome to the Truth Sector’ sign.)

ONE. Look here “Unrest during Memory Day Celebration a hoax designed to test citizens’ loyalty”
TWO. Well that’s a relief, I’m not sure what I would do if any actual violence broke out.
THREE. Are you sure you can trust them flyers?
TWO. Hush now, that’s the head of security over there.
THREE. He don’t scare me.
ONE. Well he should. I hear they implanted him with special memories of combat training.
THREE. Well shit, let’s hope they remembered to give him muscle memory in case of an emergency.
TWO. What emergency could there possibly be now? We live in a safe and civilized community.
ONE. Well we would if it weren’t for BF13
THREE. Oi! Watch it mate!
(A figure walks on blankly as they tussle.)

TWO. Look here, here comes another one.
THREE. Poor sod, fresh wipe is she?
ONE. I hate to imagine what she did to deserve that.

Maybe she was a rebel.
THREE. Nah, they was myths remember, says so on today's info flyer.

9. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
(The work whistle calls and the OWC begin to fall into line. As they attempt to return to work the REBELS run on stage ripping up flyers and causing havoc as they converge on the freshly wiped Rebel to re-alter their memory device. They all turn on the OWC. Direct confrontation between the REBELS and the OWC. The REBELS move, threatening the OWC and drawing in more of the REBELS from the shadows. OWC cover their ears as they sing and FELICITY appears. Finally, they all break ranks and chaos falls into hopeless despair.)

[REBELS]
What do you want out of life?
If you can dream it, you have to take it
What's the point of even trying if you're living your life as a slave?
What are we all here for if not to be our own person?
We're not mindless drones enslaved by peace
We're people with minds of our own

I once dreamed of country, and glory and war
With a global Corporation what am I fighting for?

Freedom!

Honour!

And a world with no less

Ideals as naïve as the Corporations peace

What do you want for yourself?
Just take it and make what you can out of nothing
We're not given a cent

count the peaks that I envisaged, this number is still reasonably effective due to its use of simple gestures, heavy footwork, and the lowering of the performers' centre of gravity – all of which can be observed here.

< Perhaps the most derivative gesture of the entire piece. This is yet another number I would love to revisit with performers who have a greater degree of training.
It’s our turn to work for ourselves

My dreams don’t matter, I’m part of a system

Working towards a much larger goal

Keep that in mind and everything will be fine. Just fine.

(A short dance break where the Rebels attempt to break out of the clutches of the OWC. In the next verse, the company split and sing in two sections for each group, echoing each other.)

What do you want for yourself?

My dreams are nothing

Take what you can and run

There’s something bigger than me

No one cares who you are

< The entry of the remaining OWC leaves the Rebels severely outnumbered and forced to regroup as they are surrounded. Note the juxtaposition here between the diagonal lines of the OWC which mirrors ‘Prologue’ and the Rebels who huddle into a protective circle as the OWC did in both the ‘Prologue’ and ‘The Celebration’.

< There were originally a series of lifts in this dance break which greatly added to the excitement and dynamism of this confrontation between the OWC and the Rebels. Unfortunately, most of them had to be cut due to a variety of reasons, most notably the lack of training in lifts from many of the cast, and the fact that Ian’s costume greatly limited his mobility and dexterity which made previously rehearsed lifts unsafe to execute in performance. This was a great disappointment to me as we had spent quite some time training and rehearsing for these lifts, and I felt that it greatly lessened the impact of this section of choreography.

< This next section where the Rebels plead with the OWC to think for themselves was an element of the choreography that I felt was very visually effective, and aligned well with my choreographic objectives. In hindsight, I wish I could have had more time with the dancers in order to help them link the steps together in a way that came across more naturally and less fragmented.
[OWC]
My loyalty is all I have now

[REBELS]
Nothing’s enough to get by

[OWC]
It must be enough for me

[COMPANY]
Is this enough for me? Is this enough for me?
Is this enough for me? Is this enough for me?
Is this enough for me? Is this enough for me?
Is this enough for me?

[ROBERTA]
Is this enough for me?

[COMPANY]
This life is not enough for me

(FELICITY emerges from where she was watching and moves through the united ENSEMBLE. They break warily back into factions.)

< The build in tension here is created not only through the chaotic movements of the dancers, but also the music, lyrics, vocal harmonies, and lighting. In the workshop the performers fell backwards away from their wipe bands, however this movement would have proved dangerous in such a confined space with so many performers. As a result, in the final choreography the ensemble lunges forwards in a crescendo of frenzied movement. Within this moment, the OWC and Rebels are virtually indistinguishable from each other. For all of their differences, these two groups are both hurting from the influence of the corporation, whether they realise it or not.

< As the music for this number staggers to a stop, the violent spasms and gasps of the ensemble provide a sobering look at the effects of the memory wipe technology on them. This is arguably quite horrifying imagery, not dissimilar to “The Seven Seas of Rhyme” in We Will Rock You – albeit without the camp overtones to soften it. I wanted this moment to be deeply uncomfortable for the audience, perhaps even bringing back their own memories of feeling overwhelmed within their own lives.
10. THE BURNING

[FELICITY]
One world. One voice. One freedom. One choice

[FELICITY & OWC]
One people, united under one banner of faith

(All are now gathered in formation below the podium. WILL comes out with a megaphone.)

[WILL]
Citizens! Any documentation
Shall be burned if its citation
Has a date that precedes this day
Workers of the Truth Sector
You’ll be called a defector
If caught by an inspector
With books you try to hide away

[ENSEMBLE]
We hear and we obey

[IAN]
And so our history fades with each burning day

[JULIA]
Day by day I sit here

< The circle motif appears again here in the patterning, with the exhausted masses clustering around Felicity for both protection and comfort.

< The rhythmic pulsing and swaying of the ensemble here, gathered below Will helps to show the power that he has over the populace. While this and the following number will ultimately see the beginning of the Rebels assimilation into the ranks of OWC, at this stage they still seem uncertain, swept up by the power of the corporation.

< The bonfire prop used here and in 'Big Brother is Watching You' was one of the most complex and difficult pieces of scenery that we produced for this show. In order to facilitate the circular patterning of my choreography it required a mobile power source (in order to mitigate tripping hazards) as well as lights and a smoke machine that could be operated remotely. Although the external skin did not quite meet with my expectation, the resulting effect created using the lighting and haze during this scene was
[JULIA ctd.]
Waiting for my chance to make a stand

[IAN & JULIA]
For out there the world chokes
On stagnant air
While I sit here waiting day after day
If I could I would save that world, instead I watch it burn away

(The ENSEMBLE builds a fire and burn books and old flyers. JULIA is standing by IAN when she runs for the fire and steals a book. IAN cries out but the REBELS shield her movement. The OWC panics at such blatant defiance.)

WILL. Did you see who it was?
ROBERTA. No, just a foolish girl.
WILL. Shall I pursue?
ASSISTANT. Yes.
ROBERTA. No, it’s not worth your time. Will, keep the peace here.
ASSISTANT. Let’s get these people under control.
WILL. Citizens, do not fall into panic. The Rebels do exist but they are few and we are many. Together we are strong.

< As discussed in Chapter Five, this sequence was designed to be evocative of book burnings in Germany during the Third Reich – with the audio-visual footage on the screens using real footage from this era in order to really drive the point home to the audience. It is one of my absolute favourite choreographic sections in the piece, along with the bonfire dance in ‘Big Brother is Watching You’ and might be the most developed choreography both in concept and execution. Incidentally, this number was what I taught auditionees as part of the audition process.

The mood of the ensemble here is slightly manic, mindlessly following the crowd in much the same way that the characters in Nineteen Eighty-Four take part in the two-minute hate. At various times they crumple up flyers to build the fire, deliberately breathe in the smoke, and generally partake in group behaviours that would otherwise be considered unusual, if not bordering on ritualistic. Once again, Julia is the only character to break out of the group, stealing a copy of Orwell’s book and emboldening the Rebels to speak out against Roberta in the following scene.

most pleasing, and a large improvement on the stack of chairs and cardboard boxes we used for the workshop.
OWC. Ignorance is Strength!

WILL. They will pay the price for their civil unrest. They may think they are free, but we are the ones who are mighty.

OWC. Freedom’s really slavery!

REBEL ONE. You police our thoughts with each burning day. Give us a reason to trust you.

ROBERTA. Do not test my patience. I am working for you, not against you. All I have done is shield you from the past, like a mother would her innocent babe.

REBEL TWO. Prove it to us. Give us some hope you aren’t turning us into a cog in your machine.

ROBERTA. I could turn this Age of Enlightenment into a Dark Age, but instead I offer you a gift. Under the guidance of the Head of the Truth Sector there shall be a grand celebration next Memory Day, the likes of which you have never seen. In exchange for this truthful look into our past, the rebels will cease their violence towards our innocent citizens. Let this world stand for peace and justice once again.

REBEL ONE. What about our families? They were taken from us during the wipe.
(ROBERTA stumbles and cannot continue at this mention of family.)

FELICITY. One World is your family now.

11. ONE WORLD REPRISE

[FELICITY]
You who have given us your faith
Enjoy the freedom of a fresh start
The joy and protection of the Corporation
A governmental body spanning Earth

[REBELS]
Stay in line
[OWC]
Stay loyal and true / We know we’ll be cared for if we do
[REBELS]
Conform to your life!
[OWC]
Forget about probable, uncontrollable, unknowable strife
And thank the Corporation for protection, conservation
Of the peace that they have now begun anew

< The lyrics that are reprised here from 'The Celebration' gain new meaning here with the Rebels quite literally falling into line along with the OWC. There is still a sense of unwillingness from them, but currently it is unsafe for them to speak out.
[REBEL ONE]
A year of truce won’t be hard I guess

[REBEL TWO]
There are other ways that we can fight

[REBEL ONE & TWO]
If we can bide our time we’ll see an ending to this night!

[OWC]
We will finally see a light!

[COMPANY]
One world. One voice. One freedom. One choice
One people united under one banner of faith!

(All depart except for ROBERTA.)

< Here we have an example of what McMillin calls the ‘ensemble effect’: where the song and dance builds to a point where everyone is in unison. The triumphant swell of music and voices coupled with the confident forward motion of the ensemble codes this moment as positive, however the emergence of the Voice of Orwell within the ensemble belies the consequences yet to come. This number, following on from the chaotic end of ‘What Do You Want?’ indicates a tipping point for the Rebels, and foreshadows their eventual assimilation into the OWC. I would also like to note at this time that the lines here are supposed to be entirely straight and precise, matching the patterning to the militaristic movements and patterning utilised in earlier numbers. Unfortunately, one of the cast members refused to properly realign themselves during this sequence, despite my insistence on precision. While it does not entirely spoil the overall effect, it is one of many small outliers within my choreography that greatly bothered me when re-watching the footage for my own analysis.

SCENE 6 – 2084 THE TRUTH: THE TRUTH SECTOR
SQUARE

(ROBERTA wanders the streets as the ENSEMBLE head home before curfew.)

12. NO MORE WARS

[ROBERTA]
A world of peace and freedom,

< Although the assimilation of the Rebels into the OWC has already begun in the previous two numbers, we see here that there is still discontent and confusion amongst both the Rebels, and members of the OWC. Roberta’s fears as both leader and mother serve here as a microcosm of the broader concerns of the other inhabitants of this world. During this number the ensemble works to illustrate the inner thoughts of Roberta through their actions. In addition, there is a strong visual shift between the ‘dance’ choreography performed by the company in ‘The Burning’ to staged movement in smaller groups here. This was a very deliberate choice that allows the audience to focus on the lyrics, allowing some space between large ensemble numbers to avoid performer and audience fatigue.
[ROBERTA ctd.]
A brand new world with no more wars
Where no one is scared for their children
A world where they aren’t begging on all fours
  There’s no price too high to pay
  For the sake of family
Nothing I wouldn’t do, haven’t done
To see them living safe and happy
So they don’t recall their past
So they don’t know who I am
So they pass me in the street
  As only a stranger can
So I won’t miss what once was
When there’s now a future of ‘can’
  I won’t wish for any more
It’s my punishment for carrying out their plan
  I will let my humanity go
  And embrace the greater good
A world of peace and freedom
Where I’m the bad guy, so I’m the bad guy
  Well someone should

< We have already seen several groups move through the city streets in this number including a young woman (who was originally meant to have a baby) and an elderly person, both of whom are assisted by other cast members. Here we see two men walking almost in step, but slightly out of sync. As they move to go their separate ways, they both pause as if to look back but ultimately shove their hands deeper into their pockets and leave. The subtext here was that these characters had a connection before the wipe, paralleling the relationship between Ian and Will and specifically the moment where Ian reaches out to him during 'The Plan'.

< Here we see a small, isolated group of Rebels protesting by throwing projectiles at Roberta’s office. At first, they move as if in slow motion until they are caught out and escape into the night.
[ROBERTA ctd.]
Angry voices in the street
I can understand their pain
I need to shut them out
Or this whole scheme
Will surely end up being in vain
So they don’t recall their past
So they don’t know who I am
So they pass me in the street
As only a stranger can
So no one who sees my face
Knows me truly as I am
This new person I’ll embrace
It’s my punishment
For if I can’t, who can?

< Here once again we see Roberta watching Julia, who is drawn to the images of Felicity on the screens but is unsure why.
SCENE 7 – 2084 REHEARSALS: THE THEATRE BY THE MAIN SQUARE – MONTHS LATER

(The AV flicks back to FELICITY’S heroic face, but it is subtly closer than before, cutting off the words.)

ONE. (Reading the flyer:) Look at this, “World unity stats soar as Memory day is reclaimed”

TWO. (Reading the flyer:) “Hope has never been higher as the Face of the Corporation hits the mark”

ONE. What a load of rubbish.

THREE. Do you think anyone will actually buy this?

TWO. If you didn’t work in the Truth Sector you would.

THREE. Are you calling me gullible?

ONE. Watch it!

(WILL calls over from where he has been lurking via the megaphone.)

WILL. Will the trouble makers in Section Two desist with physical interactions and return to work.

THREE. As you wish your worship. Hey, have you ever wondered why the higher ups all sound so different to us?

ONE. Different to you, you mean?
TWO. Well its easy innit? Thems with the power control all things, including a “proficiency of languages”.
THREE. Seems a little strange though. I mean, who chose who got to be in the chain of command. Did our past lives contribute to that? In if they did, well that hardly seems fair.
ONE. Are you suggesting that those in power are abusing their station and oppressing us via a class system based on arbitrary factors beyond our control?
THREE. Huh?
ONE. Do you really think after all One World Corporation has done for us that it’s corrupt? *(They ponder this for a while.)*
ALL. Nah.

13. REHEARSALS
*(Transition to an over the top excited rehearsal montage.*

*Cheerful music plays. The ENSEMBLE dances energetically.*

*Some are rehearsing movements for the show led by FELICITY. Some are trying on parts of costumes. Papers are being passed around by IAN as he coordinates the script.*

< My original concept for this number called for a much wider variety of dance styles, including a dance break where the ensemble would work their way through a brief history of show dance. My original notes read as follows: “*Follies* style showgirls a la Busby Berkeley, a 1930s/1940s style tap routine, a 1950s dream ballet, psychedelic 1960s/1970s moshing, classic jazz/Fosse, and possibly some more contemporary styles?”. This number would ideally marry traditional musical theatre dance with previously established themes of disruption and alienation. This was to be done by making traditional movements “warped and twisted” with “uncontrollable spasms marring the steps. Over the top smiles belying the reality of their world”.

JULIA is late again. She keeps trying to talk to IAN but is instead given a script and pointed towards FELICITY.)

[ENSEMBLE]
Making do with what we're given
Make it seem like all is forgiven
Let history show that we were first
To turn what we were given
Back from the worst
And make do
I am one of millions
A cog in the great machine
I know my place I know my task
One World creates greatness
One World is totally blameless

(Music changes to quicker pace. They whisper as they sing.)

[GROUP ONE]
You think you have control of your life
But you don't there are gaps
There are pains and things you cannot explain
But you know to be true if they are
But they're not for your memory says it cannot be so

This concept was in part a response to my historical research and the idea of show dance consisting of a series of ‘lost dances’. An imagining of how these performers might be able to piece together an approximation of early forms of show dance in a world where all historical information has been heavily censored. Another inspiration for this number was Mueller’s principles of integration. When I originally considered basing the numbers around his work, this number was envisioned as a completely un-integrated number which had nothing to do with the plot or character. As the narrative developed, this concept was eventually abandoned.

In this final iteration, ‘Rehearsals’ became much simpler. This was in part due to the artistic direction that composer Nick Choo followed in this scene which was very different to the notes we had provided him with. Ultimately, I chose to make this scene a balletic style warm-up and stretching session. It has been suggested that ballet technique is the core of most forms of concert dance, and by extension, show dance. It also makes sense that within the world of 2084, ballet would be better documented than musical theatre dance. Roberta reveals in ‘Control’ that she has a personal interest in ballet, and the character of Julia is linked consistently to this style.

Our written survey responses indicated that the use of ballet in this number was not embraced by all our audience members, with several expressing confusion as to its inclusion within the show, and specifically within these rehearsal scenes. With more time to develop the score in collaboration with Nick, I might have fought harder to realise my original choreographic concept; however during the development of these scenes we were already coming to realise how long the play would be, and it was decided that a long dance break during this number would serve nothing to advance the narrative or characters and would also seem out of place with my previous use of dance. In addition, the types of costumes required for the showgirl segment alone were simply untenable with our limited budget.

< The partnered wheelbarrow movement associated with the lines “I am one of millions / a cog in the great machine” was a moment I greatly enjoyed as a performer, as well as when I was watching the footage for my analysis. This move is both whimsical and childlike, while also suggesting a certain amount of control being taken away from one member of these partnering’s.
[ENSEMBLE]
 My life has purpose
 My place is right here
 One World will keep me safe and everything will be fine

[GROUP TWO]
 You think that you know who you are
 But you don’t it’s true
 But what’s true isn’t true at least not for you
 But you’re told that it is
 Though it isn’t
 So you fight for control of your life and your mind
 And all that you know which comes from them
 Is it lies?
 You do not know for you cannot recall who you are
 Therefore it can’t be so

[ENSEMBLE]
 You are the Corporation and it is you
 Everything will be fine
 Just fine

< The choreography for the first group (above) was a combination of sharp and snappy movements juxtaposed with moments that were much smoother and slower. They were designed to match the pace and rhythm of the music and the lyrics.

< The subtext here, explicated through their manic smiles and the ongoing full body twitches, is that the ensemble are very much lying to themselves and to the audience. Everything is not going to be fine, nobody is safe, and the Memory Day celebration they are rehearsing for is little more than a sham to try and keep the population happy and docile.

< This second group is more unhinged than the first, as seen through the fragmented and confused nature of their lyrics, and the increasing number of physical tics that manifest whenever they begin to edge too close towards the truth.

< One of the few instances of a triangular pattern, this brief section of the choreography hearkens back to the use of hats in the opening number, evoking a very generic Broadway jazz style. The steps, patterning, and bright cheesy smiles are also a nod to my background as a competitive dancer, though in this instance the smiles bely once again the untruths being sung by the ensemble. Once again, the audience are being shown that beneath the artifice of the singing and dancing, these characters are deeply traumatised.
(The ENSEMBLE take advantage of the break in rehearsal to stretch and rest. ROBERTA who has been watching the action, calls for her ASSISTANT.)

ROBERTA. Comrade Charrington!
ASSISTANT. Yes ma’am.
ROBERTA. Report.
ASSISTANT. Statistics indicate support for the corporation is at 98% worldwide. The rebels are still out there, but they are keeping quiet for now.
(WILL approaches but pauses what he is going to say when he hears this.)
ROBERTA. Yes Will, what is it?
(WILL hesitates.)
ROBERTA. Out with it, it’s been a long day. We’re so close to the 2085 Memory Day Celebration, and there is still so much to do.
WILL. I hate to contradict the information you are being given, but I fear those statistics are far too optimistic. We have recently completed the surveillance project. Every sleeping quarters is now under constant scrutiny and I believe
WILL ctd. there has been a significant rise in dissatisfaction with the corporation.

ASSISTANT. Nonsense. We have eliminated bigotry, racism, sexism and most forms of violence, what do the people have left to be dissatisfied about?

ROBERTA. We have done all of that, but does that matter to them? They wouldn't even know what racism is because, as far as they know, they have never experienced it. Yes, we have eradicated the issues of war and homelessness and starvation that ravaged the world to such a malleable population, but with no way of measuring the difference between 2083 and 2084, perhaps we need to do more than spread a few slogans and fliers, do more than this annual celebration. We need to give them hope.

ASSISTANT. Perhaps you are right. With your permission I will take your ideas to them tonight, see what they have to say about it.

ROBERTA. Do so. Thank you for bringing this to my attention Will. We must keep the people happy, keep everything in balance, under control.
14. CONTROL
(The ENSEMBLE dance robotically, terror apparent on their faces. The AV moves closer in towards FELICITY’S face.)

[ROBERTA]
Everything must be regulated
The population segregated
Balance here is fundamental
Society is compartmental
Throw out ideas that are outdated

[ENSEMBLE]
Lift, hold, release

[ROBERTA]
Watch them recreate an art form
[ENSEMBLE]
Glide, step, together

[ROBERTA]
I’ve always enjoyed the ballet

[ENSEMBLE]
Step, hold, energy

[ROBERTA]
It is so refined, it has such control

< Unlike ‘Rehearsals’, which is more fluid, the choreography for ‘Control’ is much more robotic. I liken the ensemble here to circus animals, terrified of their masters but forced to perform regardless. Their movements are stilted and robotic throughout – although some of the performers were arguably much better at executing the moves in this style than others.

< The short bursts of lyrics and movement from the ensemble are inspired in part by ‘One’ from A Chorus Line.

< Roberta’s enjoyment of ballet as an art form is not only linked to her relationship with her daughter Julia (explored in greater detail in their duet in Act two, ‘I Remember’) but also her need to control the population. The strictly formalised nature of this dance style appeals to her personal and professional sensibilities, as seen by her lyrics below. It is also part of her justifications for the Memory Day performances to the Assistant.
[ENSEMBLE]
Everything is perfect, they are watching us. Ssh, glide
[ASSISTANT]
Theatre is frivolity
Why condone creativity?
When a book or a flyer could keep the peace
Tensions have been on the increase
It’s much too dangerous, there’s too much jollity

[ROBERTA]
Trust

[ASSISTANT]
You seem eager to get them on your side
Is there something you’re trying to hide?

[ENSEMBLE]
Hold, together

[ASSISTANT]
Those up high have been watching
You know that there is no stopping
They will know it if you ever lied

[ENSEMBLE]
Relax

< Another significant instance of underlying tension being expressed through the juxtaposition between what is being said and the physical performance of the ensemble who are painfully aware of, and terrified of being watched.

< The male performer who steps out here to perform solo was one of the better trained dancers in the cast, though he was often difficult to direct due to his relative inexperience as an actor. This lovely moment of balletic virtuosity here which is quickly quashed by Felicity is another example of self-expression being repressed and controlled by the corporation.

< I was never quite happy with these turning sequences but the sheer amount of numbers within the show as well as the relative inexperience of many of the cast meant that there needed to be sections of the choreography that were relatively simple and repetitive in order to ensure maximum retention. The steps here were only one of the segments I had to simplify from my initial choreography during the rehearsal process.
[ROBERTA]
What do we fight for if not our art?
Why not let them have some heart?
What better way to show them
Bygones are bygones
There is no war on
It’s a fresh new start

[ENSEMBLE]
Left, hold, release
Glide, step, hold

[ROBERTA]
Peace, care, control. Art.

(As the lights change FELICITY receives a memo from the ASSISTANT. Meanwhile, JULIA hastily presses a note into IAN’s hands)

FELICITY. Julia O’Brien?
JULIA. Ma’am?
FELICITY. Due to unforeseen circumstances, my duet partner has had to be cut from the Memory Day Celebrations

< The ensemble moves in their own individual orbits here, some spiralling, some pausing, but all eventually moving into balancing poses.

< The removal of the ensemble member here received a few chuckles from audience members, but by and large I think the casual horror of someone being dragged out of the Memory Day rehearsals by the head of security – presumably to have their memories re-wiped – was understood by most as another example of just how horrific a world these characters are living in.
(There is a brief pause while a member of the ENSEMBLE is dragged off stage by WILL.)

FELICITY. You have been selected as her replacement. (Julia is dumbfounded.) Well, say something!

JULIA. Sorry! Thank you ma’am. (Pause – she sees her chance and she decides to take it.) Can I ask you a question? Have we...met before?

FELICITY. Sweetheart, I’m the Face of the Corporation, everyone knows who I am.

JULIA. Yes, but it goes deeper than that. I feel as though I know you and that all of this parading around parroting their words is beneath you.

FELICITY. Are you suggesting the Corporation is unworthy of our complete and total dedication? Because that sounds like Rebel talk to me.

JULIA. Not at all. Besides, you would know if I was a Rebel, I hear they have found a way to override the wipe, get their memories back.

FELICITY. What an outrageous fiction!

JULIA. So if you were given the choice you would stay like this? With no idea who you really are?
FELICITY. I know who I am, Felicity Goldstein, Face of the Corporation, star of the annual Memory Day Celebration.

JULIA. But beyond that. Don’t you ever think about who you could be if you were given the choice? Who your friends could be? Your family?

FELICITY. If you don’t cease this seditious talk, I will be forced to take you to the Head of Security for questioning. I don’t know who got you this position working with me, but they obviously made a mistake. I may be forced to put up with your presence, but that doesn’t extend to your opinion, so please keep it to yourself.

15. SOMETHING ABOUT YOU (Cut song)
(Some of the ENSEMBLE transform into press, complete with flashing cameras/notebooks. Remaining ensemble remain onstage, pop through to help sing in the ensemble parts. The choreography is playful, almost balletic, with lots of energy.)

< Although it was not included in the final performance of 2084, this number was cut late enough into our rehearsal process that we still included it in the cast recording – in part to show our ongoing creative process. For this reason, I have also included it in my final script annotations, even though my choreography for it does not appear in the show. Originally, this would have been the number that closed Act one, finishing with another disruption of the choreography when Felicity pushes Julia to the ground, ultimately damaging her memory device. When we first attempted to run this entire sequence, starting with ‘Rehearsals’ and ‘Control’ we soon realised that the physical demands we were placing on our largely amateur performers were far too great.

Of the three songs in this scene, it was decided that this was the least important in terms of plot and narrative. In addition, our lyricist/book writer Sarah felt that it enforced exactly the kind of tired old tropes we were trying to avoid in the rest of the show. Rather than constructing an entire number
building up the antagonism between Felicity and Julia just so it could serve as a plot device for the damaging of the wipe band, we simply removed this song and quickly solved our issues with performer fatigue, the overall length of the act, and our discomfort with using the well-worn trope of women being pitted against each other as competition within the musical.

(FELICITY pushes JULIA aside and she lands on her wrist, which has the wipe band. The screens short out and for a few moments JULIA looks disorientated. Lights dim on stage with a spotlight on JULIA. Everyone else freezes. Images appear on the screens of wars and oppression mixed with families and friends. They fade to a buzz of static. ALL exit except JULIA.)

16. I REMEMBER PRE-PRISE TWO

[JULIA]
There you are
Right where I left you
The wraith in the dark
Reaching for me
Almost two years
Lost to their torment
Writhing like demented
[JULIA ctd.]

Puppets on strings
Well I won't do it anymore
Do you hear me?
Can you see me?
One World Corporation
I remember
I remember
I remember all of the stolen years!

END ACT ONE
### ACT TWO

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<th>SCENE 8 – 2084 MEMORY MATTERS: A STREET OUTSIDE THE THEATRE</th>
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(JULIA enters a spotlight. The memory shadows are lit behind the scrim. FELICITY with her cigarette, IAN with a bloodied bandage, WILL crumbled and facing away. ROBERTA enters part way through.)

### 17. SEE ME

[JULIA]

I remember you were there

Standing right there

Cigarette in hand

You were preaching against the new regulations

And you were free

Free to be what you were

Which is not what you are

In this farcical life of theirs

See me

< Throughout **2084** the flashbacks and memories of the characters are signified using the semi-transparent scrim, beginning with ‘One World’. It is used to create a physical barrier that differentiates between past and present, making memories appear misty and far away. Sadly the quality of the video recording has not allowed for as clear an image as the audience would have seen during the live performances. As a result, I will be annotating ‘See Me’ and ‘I Remember’ with more of my choreographic notes in order to fill in the gaps of the video recording and editing process.

< This number and indeed much of the choreography in this act are more about stillness than movement. The lighting is designed to subtly highlight the characters as Julia sings about them, appearing as ghostly memories behind the scrim.

< The irony here is that Julia's repeated pleas for her friends to see her is being directed to the memory of who they **were**, and not who they currently **are**.
[JULIA ctd.]
And you stood there
Ever ready with the signal to run for our lives
Load of good that did us
We were marked like the others
And we were free
Running and dying
With bombs exploding and bullets flying
Yes we were free
See me
I see it all
A world filled with horror and fear
Of hiding and tears
We were free, free to fall
I see it all
Now you can’t recall who you are
Here you stand merely a shadow of what you were
Now you’re safe but you’re not free
I’ll never ever have to see
You die with a bullet in your skull
You will never recognize me at all
[JULIA ctd.]
I can clearly see just how it will be
This Felicity will smile and she will wave
She'll have to behave their face and their doll
   I see. My Felicity is gone
And this Ian will blunder through
Trying his best but not succeeding
   He was the leader of our coup
Last I saw him he was bleeding
   He won't remember
Will, lovely and so kind, follower to the bone
   Now you control our minds
And sit up on your throne
   With the one behind it all
With her
And yet I see you're all happy like I was before
   The choice for mankind lies between
Freedom and happiness
   And for the great bulk of mankind
Happiness is better
Yet you are not free though this life is better has more

< The inclusion of Roberta in this number is designed to ensure that the audience realises that Julia has remembered their relationship. This is important for the following scenes, and the eventual confrontation between mother and daughter. Not only did Roberta betray Julia's trust, she also betrayed her closest friends and then forced them all into having their memories wiped so that they would not remember.
Wealth and success some memories and happiness
   Two whole years’ worth
   And who knows what else lies in store?
   It would be better if I left like she left! …No.
   I see you all and I must stay and fight
   I will stand tall to help you see
   Who you can be!

(IAN runs in with JULIA’s note looking furious and hopeful.)

IAN. What is this? Are you mad? You’re lucky I wasn’t caught and searched. You must have an angel watching over you, it’s a wonder you haven’t been found out. I saw you with Felicity, drawing attention to yourself is dangerous!

JULIA. Ian! Oh Ian you have no idea how good it is to see you again.

IAN. You just saw me. Please let go, you are acting like a mad person, like it’s not you at…oh.

JULIA. Yes. I remember. It’s these chips they have on us all, they don’t just monitor our vitals, they hold our
JULIA ctd. memories back, give you a blank personality so you are easier to control. Even worse, they can program new personalities, turn you into someone completely new.
IAN. How did you break it?
JULIA. I’m not sure. I fell, that seems to have short-circuited it. At least for now. What’s more is I know the Rebellion is real and I know that they are right.
IAN. How?
JULIA. Because you started it. Here.
(She holds out a battered copy of 1984. It is filled with notes.)
IAN. This is my handwriting.
JULIA. Yes. You sent us our orders in a code. We all had a copy of their ‘sacred book’ and used it as a cypher to get our message out there of freedom and justice. It seemed only fitting we use the basis of their manifesto.
IAN. But, how could I be the leader of the Rebellion? They sound like terror…
JULIA. Shhh. Never use that word. You always told us that civil liberties were bigger than the individual, but the individuals’ needs were civil liberties.
IAN. I sound pretentious.

< We see again here the moral complexity of the world of 2084, with Ian suggesting that the Rebellion he led (though he does not truly remember his own part in it) was nothing more than terrorists working against the corporation. This is at odds with the framing of Julia and Ian as likeable characters, struggling with their loyalty to the OWC and trying to champion freedom of expression and choice. Yet their past actions and heavy involvement with the Rebellion suggest that they may have been involved in the explosion at the theatre in ‘One World’ as well as other dubious behaviour. The question for the audience then becomes, who is actually the villain of this story? The obvious answer is the Voice of
JULIA. But most importantly: the memory wipe, everything that this society is built upon is a lie. Those pamphlets you write every day, what do they always say?
IAN. That we chose this, for the good of all.
JULIA. It’s a lie Ian. They did it without our consent. They tore us away from our families, our friends, the people we loved.

(Menacing music begins as WILL reveals himself from where he has been listening.)

WILL. I’ll stop you right there comrade. You see, I have heard enough now that even Roberta can’t protect you.
JULIA. That woman means nothing to me. I don’t need her protection.
WILL. Tsk tsk, after all she’s done for you? She’s covered up more than just your sordid past.
JULIA. Will, you don’t understand, they’re lying to you. This isn’t who you are!
WILL. Quiet! I am doing my duty, which is to keep the peace.

Orwell who was instrumental in bringing down the Rebellion, with Roberta even suggesting that she is seen as “the bad guy” on more than one occasion. But Ian, Julia, and the new Rebels are also not innocent in the havoc they have wrought upon the OWC.
18. MEMORY MATTERS

[WILL]
There is nothing you can say to dissuade me
I am sworn to protect the peace, so that’s what I’ll do
I deal in honest truths not in word games
Don’t expect me to stand aside while you’re talking of a coup

[IAN]
That’s not –

[WILL]
I’m not a selfish person, I always put others first
The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few
I can’t risk you lies spreading to others
A memory wipe is long overdue
So say your farewells to this life and the things that you
though you knew
(Overlapping)

[JULIA]
Will look in his eyes
You must see the truth
Why are you so loyal?
You know you’re being used

[WILL]
I can’t remember your face
Yet I know that you are there
You must have felt a twinge of something wrong
Don’t be fooled by One World’s song
The piece of the puzzle was right there in front of you all along

I see empty space
There’s nothing there
My duty is clear it’s apparent there’s nothing here I can do

(Overlapping)

Look in his eyes
You think you have Control of your life
But you don’t

See him
There are gaps there are pains
And things that

See me
[IAN]
There’s nothing you can do

[IAN]
This is my purpose

[IAN]
[IAN]
[IAN]

Your memory cannot be trusted
[IAN]
My memory tells me it cannot be so

[WILL]
My memory tells me that it must be so

[WILL, IAN & JULIA]
Who can you trust when you must,
If you just do not know for sure?

(Two SECURITY GUARDS enter menacingly, WILL who has been wavering now steps back, in charge once more.)

WILL. Take them away.
IAN. Will!
WILL. Process them and wipe them.
JULIA. No!

(IAN is taken off, he doesn’t resist. JULIA begins to struggle and manages to get to WILL. She damages the circuitry on his wipe band, and he appears disorientated. The AV flashes his face as the GUARDS subdue JULIA and drag her off.)
[WILL]
I remember your face
Oh my God you were there
I see you now

(The music turns dangerous and the ENSEMBLE rushes on. There is chaos as WILL tries to right his mistake. The ENSEMBLE keeps getting in his way. He calls for IAN and JULIA. The lights flash, all is confusion and chaos. The ASSISTANT runs into Will’s way. The ASSISTANT appears unhinged.)

ASSISTANT. Tick tock, tick tock time is running out on my clock
WILL. Get out of my way!
ASSISTANT. Out of the way Charrington, yes out of the way, they are going to want you out of the way.
WILL. I said move!

(WILL pulls his gun on the ASSISTANT. The chaos stops and ensemble move aside. The ASSISTANT giggles.)

< An example of dance being used as scene transition, and a return of circular/spiral patterning. Will struggles to make his way through the Memory Day crowds, by chance finding the Assistant who has finally cracked from repeated memory wipes.
ASSISTANT. Yes, that’s the way. Solve the world’s problems will the squeeze of a trigger. Pull it, pull it.
WILL. What’s wrong with you?
ASSISTANT. What’s wrong with me? What’s wrong with you? We are all fools playing with fire. None of us are acting like ourselves.
WILL. I think I’m finally acting like myself.
ASSISTANT. Or else the world’s gone mad. Oranges and Lemon’s say the bells of Saint Clements.
WILL. What have they done to you?
ASSISTANT. Too many people poking around, too many changes and Charrington’s drowned.
WILL. They did this to you? The Corporation?
ASSISTANT. Perhaps Charrington should take a leaf out of Will’s book. Perhaps Charrington should squeeze the trigger.
(He opens up his jacket and reveals explosives.)
WILL. No! Wait! There are innocents living in this quadrant. People like you and me, lost and alone, searching for hope.

< The act of giving the explosive vest to a stalwart member of the OWC (a move that was most likely orchestrated by the Voice of Orwell, although it is never explicitly stated) flips the good/evil dynamic on its head once again. Will has just realised not only his past romantic relationship with Ian but also the atrocities that were committed by both sides before the memory wipe. While his instinct here and going forward is ultimately to protect innocent civilians, his overarching guilt over his past actions will be his primary motivating force for the rest of the play.
19. TICK TOCK

(During the song members of the ENSEMBLE dance strangely with the ASSISTANT, changing his personality repeatedly as he becomes more and more deranged.)

[ASSISTANT]
I have a time bomb ticking in my pocket
   Tick tock. Tick tock
I wonder if they’d like it take any of it back
   Tick tock. Tick tock
   It could go
   off at any moment
   Not a microsecond’s postponement
Would they even seek atonement?
   Tick tock. Tick tock
I have a time bomb in my jacket
   Tick tock. Tock tick
I bet they weren’t expecting that
   Tick tock. Tock tick
I wonder would the story feature
Would they just ignore their creature?
Never mind for this will teach ‘em all

< The clock imagery in ‘Tick Tock’ is a visual and aural motif that can be observed across the lyrics and music, as well as in the choreography and the set. There are visual allusions here to both Busby Berkeley and Florenz Ziegfeld, as well as to Jane Dudley’s ‘Time Is Money’ which is discussed in Chapter Three. The boxes on wheels spin like cogs in a variety of shapes, with the ensemble members controlling them. These set pieces were a means of making the closest thing to an automated set that our budget could muster, a way of showing the passage of the Assistant and Will through the city, and also served to revisit recurring patterns including the circles and lines that have been present from the opening number. The use of the ensemble as stagehands here is also a symbol of the growing depersonalisation of these characters and foreshadows the final assimilation of everyone into the OWC at the end of the show. It also serves as a juxtaposition to ‘The Plan’ in Act one where the subjugation of individual expression leads to the mechanical typing of the workers, but the staged movement and choreography contains brief moments where they break out of their robotic movements and even have small comedic moments, as was the case with the shoulder massages and physical therapy.
[ASSISTANT ctd.]
Tick tock. Tick tock
My life now comes in flashes
Each one different, the next one clashes
Each person I become
Making me more numb
I'll teach them all to meddle truly
It's my revenge for all their cruelty
And soon they'll know the meaning of real pain
Tick tock. Tick tock
This ticking time bomb will tick its last refrain
Tick tock. Tock tick

(A mad dance break)

WILL.
Wait!

(The ASSISTANT freezes. The ensemble slowly begin to exit, taking the boxes with them as they go.)

[ASSISTANT]
Charrington, no need for dramatics, I have a plan
To hit them where it hurts
We'll take out this world-wide nation

< This dance break, although short, makes an obvious visual play on the clock motif, with the ensemble literally creating a clock face with their bodies and hands around the Assistant. As the clock is dismantled piece by piece the Assistant grows more and more unhinged until Will finally manages to reach him.

< As mentioned above, this number is linked choreographically to 'The Plan', and here we see that it is also linked thematically through the music.
[WILL ctd.]
Give them a revelation
One that they will not forget
We must act now to be effective
And those in need will be saved, it’s our objective
To take out all the memory wipes, now we must hurry

WILL. The wipe facility is close to the theatre, which will be packed for memory day. Can I count on you?

ASSISTANT. Here comes a chopper to chop off your head…

WILL. I guess that will have to do.

SCENE 9 – 2085 MEMORY DAY: THE MAIN SQUARE, NEXT TO THE THEATRE

(JULIA and IAN are dragged in by the SECURITY GUARDS and placed before ROBERTA and the VOICE OF ORWELL.)

VOICE OF ORWELL. And so it begins. The inevitable decline of society into needless violence, precipitated by the ignorant and those who can gain a profit.

IAN. I see you read my dossier on the old American government.
VOICE OF ORWELL. Yes I did. Inspired really. The concept that war generates enough fear to control an entire population, to get them to agree to practically anything, as long as you promise to keep the enemy aliens at bay. It doesn't matter who they are, you could change the enemy overnight and it wouldn't matter as long as you had the media on side, hell, you wouldn't even need to wage war as long as you had convincing images.

JULIA. You already have the world in thrall.

ROBERTA. Not in thrall, at peace.

JULIA. At what cost? Humanity? You sacrificed everything to forge a false sense of security for your flock of sheep.

ROBERTA. I helped give people hope.

JULIA. Hope? We're downtrodden. The people have no idea who they are, no concept of anything beyond the Corporation. No concept of love, of family. Wasn't I worth anything to you?

ROBERTA. It's because of you I did all this.

JULIA. You don't get to blame me for your mistakes!
ROBERTA. No, I'm not, that's not. I did it for you. To give you the life you deserved.

JULIA. Oh yes, well done mother. Sell out to the Corporation and hand me over like a pig on a spit. I can see now that I got everything I deserved. But it looks like you got what you deserved too. Tell me mother, how does it feel being the only one in the Sector to remember? To have to live with yourself and your actions? To watch me walk by everyday knowing that you turned your own daughter into a mindless slave of your precious Corporation?

ROBERTA. It was torture.

JULIA. Good.

ROBERTA. I don’t expect you to forgive me, but please, let me explain.

JULIA. There’s nothing you can say.

20. I REMEMBER

(Various facsimiles of JULIA dance in the background, the ballerina slowly growing older and being alternately comforted and abandoned by a facsimile of ROBERTA.)
[ROBERTA]  
I remember you were three  
You yearned to be a ballerina  
You pirouetted 'round the room for days  
I smiled then  

[ROBERTA]  
I remember you were three  
You yearned to be a ballerina  
You pirouetted 'round the room for days  
I smiled then  

[JULIA]  
I remember I was nine  
Dad was gone an abyss opened up  
You sat in a dark room every night  
Doors closed behind your eyes  
I couldn’t cry  

[JULIA]  
I remember I was nine  
Dad was gone an abyss opened up  
You sat in a dark room every night  
Doors closed behind your eyes  
I couldn’t cry  

[ROBERTA]  
I remember when you cut your hair  
How I hated it  
[ROBERTA]  
It suited you  

become much heavier. This was a deeply personal number for both Sarah and I, as she worked to incorporate elements of our own childhoods into Julia’s story in this first verse.

< A slightly amusing casting choice is seen here, as the same ensemble member who played the shrapnel also plays the youngest version of Julia. Here we see a very young ‘Julia’ struggling with her pirouettes only to be assisted by ‘Roberta’.

< This second iteration of Julia expresses her anguish and grief at the loss of her father at a young age through movement. This relates both to Sarah’s loss of her father at the age of nine, and my own fathers’ diagnosis of prostate cancer at a similar age. Although my own father did not pass away, our relationship was irrevocably changed, leading to a certain level of grief. This shared childhood trauma relating to the mortality of our parents is something that we bonded over in our personal lives long before we became artistic collaborators.

< This third and final iteration of Julia seen here is much more recent. The choreography suggests an ongoing breakdown of the relationship between herself and Roberta, who ultimately steps away and leaves all three facsimiles of Julia reaching towards her.
[JULIA]
It got me through

[ROBERTA]
I remember

[JULIA]
I remember

I remember the day you sold us out
I was mad. I couldn’t dance, I couldn’t cry
I still don’t know why
I want to know why

[ROBERTA]
I remember I longed to save us all
You were brave, I could never be that brave
So I chose to live
But I wanted you to live

[JULIA]
It never went that way

[ROBERTA]
Well what do you expect me to say?
You weren’t there that day
You were dancing

< Julia’s anger is expressed here not only in her words, but in the response from the ghostly Julia’s behind the scrim. They dance violently, expressing their rage and grief towards Roberta.

< The dancers here are performing a slow-motion backwards body roll, lifting themselves slowly to a standing position with their elbows raised to imitate a marionette puppet. The visual metaphor is obvious, suggesting the control that the corporation has over the populace, and specifically over Julia.
[ROBERTA ctd.]
Your body controlled
And I was not there
[JULIA]
You were plotting against us all
[ROBERTA]
I could not let you fall
[JULIA]
Your drones kept coming
Rounding up the sheep
They went willingly to slaughter
[ROBERTA]
They went willingly to sleep
They dream of a life
With no war and no killing
Most of them willing
[JULIA]
Not me
I could never do what you did
[ROBERTA]
Nor could I

< Here we see the ghostly facsimiles of Julia transform into the general populace, lining up to have their memories wiped before exiting with the boxes to allow Roberta's story to be told in silhouette instead.
[ROBERTA ctd.]
I didn’t try to run
I too went willingly that December
I begged them, make me forget
But now I’ve been cursed to remember

[ROBERTA]
I don’t regret saving you
Don’t regret giving you the world
My one regret is losing you
Not choosing you

[ROBERTA]
I was weak and unprepared
But I’ll do what it takes for my mistakes to be repaired

< Now that the ghostly facsimiles of Julia have exited, the space behind the scrim is free to be taken over by Roberta’s double. She kneels, waiting to be memory wiped by the Voice of Orwell, but her pleas are ultimately ignored, and she is left alone and isolated. The physical isolation of Roberta is seen throughout the entirety of *2084*, not just in her placement on stage but also in her costuming (her green coat stands apart from the black and grey colour palette of the rest of the costuming, as does her head chip). These visual cues help to indicate her isolation from the other characters, she has no real support network beyond her work colleagues and Julia is unwilling to understand her mother’s perspective due to her overarching feelings of betrayal. Sadly, there will be no common ground found between them, and Roberta will die having failed in her goal of keeping her daughter safe.
[ROBERTA]
No. They went willingly
(Overlapping)

[ROBERTA]
This world is a ballerina [JULIA]
Fragile yet controlled I don’t want to be controlled

[ROBERTA]
You don’t know what they’ll do Remember I’ve been cursed to remember

(WILL enters with the ASSISTANT. His gun is drawn. The ENSEMBLE is silhouetted at the back, they slowly move forward.)

WILL. Roberta! Let them go!
ROBERTA. Why is everyone always blaming me?
IAN. That’s the price of power. You cop the flack for all the mistakes of those you represent while they take all of the credit for all the good you do.
ROBERTA. Is that an old American proverb?

< This of course, is a lie, but one that Roberta must believe for her own sanity.

< Roberta’s metaphor here draws another parallel between ballet/dancing and control which has already been established in earlier scenes and numbers. This is particularly interesting for Julia because she is the only character within 2084 who has been allowed to use dance as a means of self-expression. Here she rejects the notion of being under any kind of control, but her words are child-like, even petulant. Much like earlier when she told Ian not to refer to the Rebels as terrorists, there is a certain naivete to her activism. Roberta meanwhile, is terrified of the repercussions that Julia may face as an enemy of the corporation.
IAN. No, I also dabbled in Australian politics.

ROBERTA. I wasn’t aware such a thing existed.

VOICE OF ORWELL. If you are quite finished, we appear to be drawing a crowd.

WILL. Good. The more people who hear this the better. Citizens, you have been lied to. You have gathered to celebrate another year of loss, not peace. Everything the Corporation has told you is a lie. They never sought our consent for the memory wipes, they are not trying to help you. They just want to control you. They have stolen too much. You once had families, free will, the ability to do more than mindlessly follow orders. I don’t know how deep this goes, what profit they are making from our enslavement. But do not be under any delusions – this is slavery. We have lost everything. Our lives, our liberty, our ability to love.

(Angry murmurs from the crowd.)

VOICE OF ORWELL. Careful Will, you are sounding like a rebel. You are confused. Look at you. You’re bleeding and crazed, who knows what has happened to you. You aren’t in your right mind, but we can fix you, restore you to what you once were.

< This scene could easily have been a song, perhaps reprising the music from ‘Memory Matters’ for a dramatic confrontation between Will and the various members of the corporation. Instead, it happens in silence, highlighting the importance of Will’s words and the seriousness of the situation. Sadly, his actions will prove to be for nought and he will not even be remembered by the people that he loves whom he is currently speaking for.

< The Voice of Orwell is clearly employing a form of gaslighting here, a type of abuse that can also be observed as part of the torture of Winston in Nineteen Eighty-Four.
For the first time in two years I am myself again and I am sickened at what you have turned us into. This isn’t life, it’s not living. It’s existing. And that’s not enough for me.

VOICE OF ORWELL. Stand down. This is your last chance.

WILL. Or what? You’ll kill me? That wouldn’t be a good look in front of this crowd with the anti-violence laws, killing a law enforcer in cold blood.

VOICE OF ORWELL. I don’t need to kill you. I’ll kill him.

(All attention turns to IAN.)

IAN. I’m sorry, what?

VOICE OF ORWELL. How perfect. One remembers and the other doesn’t. This is a much better form of punishment for wrong doers. Ignorance might not keep you fully at bay, but fear…that is a powerful motivator.

ROBERTA. No you can’t, you promised me…

VOICE OF ORWELL. Quiet. You are of no use to me anymore. Your tactics have proven ineffectual. I believe it’s time for a new regime. Charrington, my pet, make yourself useful and deal with those two (indicating JULIA and IAN). It’s time to take some real power.

(FELICITY enters.)
JULIA. Felicity!

FELICITY. You, I thought I got rid of you.

JULIA. No, it’s me, Julia. You have to listen, things aren’t as they seem…

(The ASSISTANT wipes JULIA. ROBERTA surges forward with a gasp but is held back by SECURITY GUARDS.)

FELICITY. Much better, I can’t concentrate with all that babbling.

VOICE OF ORWELL. Perfect timing my dear. There has been a change of plans. You are now the Head of Propaganda – there’s about to be a vacancy. When we are done here I want you to draft a headline: World at War! Violent attacks from across the border.

FELICITY. Which border? The corporation spans the entire world.

VOICE OF ORWELL. Any border, make up a name. Oceania has a nice ring to it. Make use of it somehow.

FELICITY. Very good sir.

WILL. Felicity wait! This isn’t you, you aren’t some lap dog, you were one of us, a rebel. A champion of people’s rights.
FELICITY. Our past lives are of little consequence. I have my orders, and I shall obey them.

(As FELICITY turns to exit, the ASSISTANT moves to IAN. He has been waving during the conversation between personalities. The AV is much closer to Felicity’s face, almost framing just the eye)

21. REHEARSALS REPRISE

[ASSISTANT]
You think that you know who you are
But you don’t it’s true
But what’s true isn’t true, at least not for you
But you’re told that it is, though it isn’t
So you fight for control of your life and your mind
And all that you know, which comes from them, is it lies?
You do not know for you cannot recall who you are
Therefore, it can’t be so

VOICE OF ORWELL. Charrington. Deal with him now.

WILL. Don’t take another step!

(He brandishes his gun at the ASSISTANT.)

< The movement in this number was one of the least developed in the show, due in part to the need to focus on other numbers that were either more important or complicated. Ideally, this scene and specifically this number would have juxtaposed the madness of the Assistant with the preparations for the Memory Day performance, perhaps setting the explosion within the theatre in a direct parallel of the opening scene instead of in the main square next to the theatre.

< As mentioned above, I would have liked to have juxtaposed the chaos of the ensemble out on the streets (who have just witnessed Will’s outburst and Julia’s public memory wipe) with the memory day performers (who
[ASSISTANT]
Some others remember the person they used to be
So there’s hope, you wish if you could learn the truth
It could be hard, you could be wrong
That is the choice in front of you
Do you die for a cause that isn’t your own
Or do you hope there’s still hope for you? No…
Chip chop, chip chop, the last man is…dead.

(The ASSISTANT violently memory wipes IAN and tears his jacket off, revealing the explosive vest. ROBERTA dives to protect JULIA who is still unconscious. FELICITY and the VOICE OF ORWELL retreat to the back and the ensemble panic and try to flee in chaos.)

[ENSEMBLE]
One World
One light
One freedom

< During the first read through of the completed script with the cast, one of the ensemble members read ahead during this scene. Her reaction to this moment was so powerfully visceral that she surged to her feet, flipping her chair over in the process, and then had to physically remove herself from the room to get her emotions back under control. She had become so emotionally attached to these characters that she simply could not contain her emotions when she discovered their fate. It was during the first read through of these final scenes that lyricist/librettist Sarah Courtis wryly exclaimed, "It’s a comedy!” despite the obvious tragedy inherent in the fate of the characters. This phrase quickly became a tagline among the cast and crew, all of whom felt extremely emotional about the tragic ending, but also loved how unflinchingly dark it was.
[ENSEMBLE]

It's not enough for…

(Just before the explosion time slows as WILL gets to IAN's side. Time stops in a shared moment between WILL and IAN. During the following song there are moments when it speeds up momentarily. The AV shows flickering flames.)

22. IN YOUR EYES

[WILL]

Ian, please look at me
Ian look into your eyes
Look at me. See me. Remember
In your eyes I see
The memory of those left behind
And in your heart I know
The slow return begins to burn your mind
Don't let me go. Please Ian
Don't let me go
Now I'm no longer blind
Don't let me burn
For the sins of all mankind

< 'In Your Eyes' was one of the hardest to stage in the whole production. 'In Your Eyes' has an almost dream-like quality to it, where the passage of time ebbs and flows, at times almost coming to a complete stop. It is part memory, and part wishful thinking/projection on Will's behalf who feels enormous guilt for his part in Ian's capture and memory wipe. The main source of inspiration for the staging of this number was 'The World Was Wide Enough' from Hamilton, where Burr's bullet darts toward Hamilton in fits and starts, time distending as Hamilton's life and loved one's flash by him. This number is a classic example of McMillin's doubled time, with the characters quite literally stepping out of book time, the song expanding a split second of time into an entire number based on Will's fantasy of how things might have gone differently if he had been able to save Ian from his fate.

< There are lyrical call-backs to several other songs here including 'See Me', 'Memory Matters' and 'I Remember'. As we near the end of the show these lyrical leitmotifs are all being revisited and wrapped up, in much the same way that earlier choreographic motifs are also being utilised and revisited.
[WILL ctd.]
Don’t let me go
Through your eyes I feel
The memory of all that is real
And deep within your soul I know
Where you’ll go is written ready to ignite
Don’t let you go
No I won’t Ian
I won’t let you go
I am holding tight
To who you are
Won’t give in without a fight
I won’t let you go
[WILL & IAN]
Now I know just who I am
They can’t take that away from me
I am more than memory
I am my own legacy
And I will be true to this man
Whatever the cost might be
Now that I know who I am

< The hands of the ensemble here intimate a small explosion, one of the sharpest movements in this number. The contrast between slow and smooth movements with the occasional move that is faster and sharper is very much inspired by the choreographic work of Steven Hoggett, especially his work on Once.

< This is a moment of sheer wish fulfilment for both characters, able to step into this suspended moment of time, however briefly, and be together for the last time.
I am never ever letting go of me
Never letting go of me

[IAN]
In your eyes I clearly see
me who I am

[IAN ctd.]
The memory of what we can be
And don't let me go

[IAN]
I won't let you go

[IAN ctd.]
Even as a memory
Through the window of your soul
In your very heart and its stories
You will remember me

(Time restarts. The ENSEMBLE surge forward and stop the ASSISTANT. The drag him away and strip him of the explosives. FELICITY calmly and coldly breaks his neck. The One World theme plays.)
[ENSEMBLE]

(WILL is left covering IAN while ROBERTA is covering JULIA. VOICE OF ORWELL smiles and walks forward.)
VOICE OF ORWELL. Are you ready now Roberta, to fully commit?
ROBERTA. Don’t make me lose her. She is my child.
VOICE OF ORWELL. There are bigger things at stake here than family, or do you need reminding just what we are fighting for?
ROBERTA. Please, if she dies, I couldn’t bear it. If she dies. I want to forget. Make me forget. Make me forget. I don’t want any part of this anymore.
VOICE OF ORWELL. Now why would I let you forget, when making you remember is so much more satisfying?
ROBERTA. Please, I just wanted her to be safe. Tell me she’s going to be safe.
WILL. You. You did this. You’re the reason this all happened.
ROBERTA. Yes I am.
WILL. You want to wipe it all out? Make it like it never happened at all?
ROBERTA. Yes.
WILL. I can help you.
ROBERTA. Thank you, oh thank you. I don't care what you do, but please make this right.
WILL. I will.
(He makes to wipe her, but shoots her instead.)
WILL. You're welcome.
(He takes one more look at the prone IAN and gives him a kiss before kneeling next to him.)
WILL. And I’m sorry.
(He shoots himself. JULIA stirs, she looks up at the dying ROBERTA.)

[JULIA]
Excuse me, madam, I didn’t see you there
[ROBERTA]
That’s alright, I’m glad I could see you again before I go
[JULIA]
Orwell protect you ma’am

< Please see Chapter Five for my analysis of the cultural implications of Will, a white law enforcement officer, shooting a woman of colour.

< Will ultimately choosing to shoot himself rather than live with his actions is partially indicative of his guilt, but also shows that the world in which these characters inhabit is so awful that many of them would rather leave it than continue to struggle. This was the second moment in these finale scenes that created an intensely emotional response amongst our cast and crew during the first read through. The cast member who stormed out earlier during the read through almost did so again upon reading the fate of Will and Roberta.

< Another direct scene mirror to the beginning of the show. The contrast between Julia’s grief for her friend and Felicity’s warmth and compassion in Scene 1 is juxtaposed by their emotional detachment here. Julia simply leaves her mother’s body in the street, unaware of their past relationship due to the memory wipe.
[ROBERTA]
And you…

(ROBERTA dies. JULIA hovers uncertainly next to her body, FELICITY enters and sees her.)

FELICITY. (Coldly:) Julia.
(Julia doesn't respond.)

FELICITY. (A little more forcefully:) Julia.
(Julia finally looks up.)

FELICITY. (Coldly:) She’s gone. Leave her.

(JULIA does. She doesn't even look back at her mother’s body as she exits. Some of the ENSEMBLE help FELICITY move ROBERTA’s body offstage. As the music swells in a sad theme the ENSEMBLE solemnly dances in sync, removing the bodies and placing their performance props into the fire. JULIA and IAN join them. Everyone’s clothing matches again. Cameras are placed on every street corner. Images of propaganda showing a world at war appear on the screens as well as an advertisement for Hate Week. Each person is wiped by another ENSEMBLE member and as they do, join in this ugly theme. The choreography utilises
militarized, marching patterns that recall the choreography in ‘Prologue’ and circles reminiscent of ‘The Burning’. Everyone is part of the One World Ensemble now.)

23. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU

[VOICE OF ORWELL]
A world of peace and freedom
A dream that now is stale and cold

[VOICE OF ORWELL ctd.]
For we know control is more important
They must conform to my new mould

[ENSEMBLE]
Memories fade with the wind. Memories fade with the wind

[COMPANY]
At last we all know who we are
Enlightened by the truth
United by war, against those pigs ‘cross the sea

(ROBERTA, WILL & the ASSISTANT enter on the balconies, ghosts of the past, powerless to stop the action)

< The soft spirals that the ensemble move in here are meant to imitate the random path of falling leaves. It is a stark contrast to the heavy movements that soon follow, with the ensemble dragging themselves out of the nearest doorways and moving aggressively to their positions. The music is jarring, discordant, and heavy.

< The movements of the ensemble here are sharp, strong, and aggressive. Unlike the slow drudgery and meekness of the OWC at the beginning of the show, this new regime is populated by citizens filled with hate instead of fear.
(Overlapping)

[COMPANY] [GHOSTS]

(Chanting) Memories fade in the chaos

Hate! Hate! Hate! Hate!

of life

Just let go

[ENSEMBLE]

Trust no friend they talk in lies

This is the end of your old lives

Big Brother has so many spies and he's watching you

[ROBERTA & WILL]

You are truth, you are love

You would have been enough for me

[ASSISTANT]

I was nothing but true to your cause

But now I am fading away, fading away

(Overlapping)

[GROUP ONE]

The past is abolished, the

future decided

[GROUP TWO]

Bright and clear

< The intertextual references to Nineteen Eighty-Four now become a part of the choreography and movement, their harsh chanting and aggressive movements juxtaposed against the stillness of the ghosts of the characters that have been lost, looking on from high above.

< The partner work here becomes more violent here, juxtaposing the more subtle partner work in ‘Control’ or the less hands-on physical violence in ‘What Do You Want?’

< The theme of surveillance is brought back to the forefront of the audience’s mind here as the narrative begins to shift from the world of 2084 to the beginning of Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four.

< We see here the return of the bonfire from ‘The Burning’, with the ensemble moving to gather more materials to burn. This time, however, neither Ian nor Julia raises their voices in protest, having previously been memory wiped. In fact, they have no solos in this number at all, instead falling into line with the other ensemble members and joining in with the burning whole heartedly.
[GROUP ONE]
We'll kill those who aren't like us
We will be steadfast and true!
Death to the swine!

[GROUP TWO]
Thought crime is death, let's not discuss an untruth
Death to the traitors!

[ENSEMBLE]
Victory is ours!

[GROUP ONE]
The struggle is over, we have already won
We love Big Brother with everything that we are

< We see here mentions of thought crime, and various violent threats made by the ensemble to anyone who challenges the status quo. These references to Orwell's novel are made more horrifying by the return of the bonfire, and the dawning understanding that there will be no happy ending. Despite their repeated refrains of 'victory' throughout this song, these characters are just as trapped as the OWC were at the beginning of the show, with the Rebels all but decimated.

< This is the second instance of a circular dance around the central bonfire. Unlike 'The Burning', the ensemble is much more visible here. They are also singing, almost chanting the lyrics whereas the previous bonfire scene was almost entirely silent. This change in visibility and engagement shows a certain amount of awareness from these characters – not only have they become enthralled in the mythos of the corporation; they are actively embracing it.

[ENSEMBLE]
All will fade away in time, all will come to dust
We'll claim victory over our own minds
The struggle is over, we have already won
We love Big Brother with everything that we are
(Overlapping)

[GROUP ONE]  [GROUP TWO]
Struggle is over, we have Ignorance is Strength! War
already won is truly Peace
We love Big Brother with Freedoms really Slavery and
everything that we are God is Power
Struggle is over, we have Victory!
already won
We love Big Brother with
everything that we are

[GHOSTS]
All will come to dust

[ENSEMBLE]
Victory! Victory!

[GHOSTS]
All will come to dust

[ENSEMBLE]
Victory! Victory!
Ignorance is Strength! War is
truly Peace

< The slogans of The Party and the gestures that have accompanied it throughout the choreography and staged movement in 2084 appear here again.

< We see the ensemble effect again here. The singing becomes a dull roar punctuated by the ghosts of Roberta, Will, and the Assistant, culminating in the final triumphant fist pump of the ensemble on the last “Victory!” before they fold back into straight lines.
Freedoms really Slavery and
God is Power
Victory! Victory!

(The screens flash to a close-up of Felicity’s eye with the
caption: “Big Brother is Watching You” The AV rewinds to
1984. As the Ensemble leave the stage in militarised lines the
Voice of Orwell takes out Ian’s copy of Nineteen Eighty-Four
and tosses it carelessly back into the flames. Blackout.)

< For me, this is the most chilling moment of the entire piece. Julia and
Ian are almost invisible as they fold into the straight lines of the ensemble
and the ghosts remain powerless. The quiet tinkling of the piano plays
like something out of a horror film, punctuated with loud crashes on the
drums and guitar that coincide with the Voice of Orwell’s silent directions
to the ensemble. The final moments, as the Voice of Orwell considers the
Rebellion’s copy of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* before tossing it into the flames
is both symbolic, and gut-wrenching. The audience is ultimately left
discomfited, with only those who are familiar with Orwell’s book
understanding that the plot of *2084* has cycled to the beginning of the
equally hopeless narrative of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

END ACT TWO
Choreographic Notes

The following expand on notations taken from my personal choreographic notes and are intended to make more explicit the movement and choreography in several key numbers which are difficult to see due to the quality of the filming and the subsequent editing of 2084. It includes choreographic notes for several numbers from each act which were more affected by these recording issues or that were deemed to need further explication from examiners.

ACT ONE

4. I REMEMBER PRE-PRISE 1

The choreography for this number occurs in the short instrumental break after Julia has finished singing. The scaffolding for this number consisted of movement cues and choreographic beats that were aligned with specific time codes in the music. These were devised in advance to provide a framework to work from as I workshops the choreography in the performance space with the actress who played Julia. These beats show a slow build from small movements to larger and more energetic flourishes, and convey Julia’s shift from fear and introversion to unashamedly exploring how her body can move without fear of repercussions:

- As Julia finishes singing, she moves as if to exit the stage, but then moves cautiously back towards the wall where the poster is hung. Focus is on the poster.
- 1:00 – Small movements, focussed on the hand and the poster in it. These grow into larger movements that are then aborted when Julia realises that she may be being watched. Focus becomes broader.
- 1:08 – Julia returns to the poster that she had abandoned. She retrieves it. Focus returns to the poster.
- 1:20 – Larger movements based on the torso and legs. Swaying, maybe moving into pirouettes. The choreography is still focussed on the poster, but Julia’s focus is more inward, almost dreamy.
- 1:23 – Larger movements segue into a travelling step moving in a circular direction. Circling, perhaps waltzing, with the poster serving as her imaginary partner.
- 1:32 – During the lift in the music Julia’s motions become even larger, perhaps including an appropriate elevation step like a leap, depending on the abilities and skills of the actress. Her focus is inward once more, she has almost forgotten that she could be being watched. She is enjoying the feeling of her body moving in familiar ways.
- 1:42 – A crescendo in the movement. More elevation steps, more spins, she is overtaken by almost complete abandon. At first Julia feels elated, but slowly she falters and comes to a stop as her focus comes back to the real world. She finishes centre stage, her focus back on the poster in her hands. Confusion and fear slowly begin to creep back in.
6. SPIDERS (CONTRABAND)

My initial choreographic notes suggest: *This number should be akin to a balancing act. Ensemble swing silently and creepily in the shadows. During the dialogue break they retreat and glisten creepily in the shadows.*

There are four pairs of partners performing here, and each pair are emblematic of one of the major characters. I have abbreviated the performers names to their first letters for ease of remembering which pair is which. The choreography here was very individualised and was workshopped with each pair of partners. Once they had mastered the basic sequence of movements and knew their major cues, I allowed the performers to make the choreography more their own and guided them to move in ways that felt right for the music and the context.

The first pair to enter (C/N) are situated upstage left on top of the box that houses the orchestra and are meant to represent the Voice of Orwell. The second (A/E) and third pair (A/A) to enter come from the upstage centre and downstage right entrances and represent Will and Roberta respectively. The final pair (S/A) enter from stage left and are representative of both the Assistant, and Felicity. The performers are paired with the taller behind and the shorter squatting down in front in order to show the maximum amount of the masks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse 1</th>
<th>Leads</th>
<th>Ensemble</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lyrics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>[IAN] This world is fragile</td>
<td>Ian moves Julia downstage left.</td>
<td>- C/N enter from stage left and climb up onto the box. When they are set on the box they slowly spin to full front, bending into position with C behind and N squatting slightly in front. They move their masked hands back and forth and lean slowly from side to side. - During this sequence A/E and S/A also enter and begin executing the same movements as C/N.</td>
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<td>It hangs on a delicate thread</td>
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<td>If we don't toe the line I fear</td>
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<td>We would wind up worse than dead</td>
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<td>I don't care how innocuous This paper seems to you All they need is a</td>
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<td>shred of proof And you've lost all you thought you knew</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lyrics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>[IAN] Spiders spinning webs for us</td>
<td>Ian looks over his shoulder as he sings.</td>
<td>- On the line “tasty morsels” the upstage partner moves their arms in a pincer like motion to capture the downstage partner. - A/A enter and crawl toward Ian and Julia at the end of this chorus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasty morsels, they play with us I pray for us You'd better hope you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't get caught</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verse 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lyrics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] I see me dancing And floating around the room</td>
<td>Julia steps past lan to look at the shade of</td>
<td>- A/A flit briefly around Julia. The other pairs freeze.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A woman, she is laughing
She sings a haunting tune
[IAN] Enough, you don’t know
Any more than I
What all our lives were like
Before the wipe of last July
[JULIA] I could be dancing
[IAN] No, you must be rid of this
Burn the paper thoroughly and –
Wait, what is this?

**Dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics/Dialogue</th>
<th>Leads</th>
<th>Ensemble</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] ‘Corporation plots: memory wipe a bid for control.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] So it’s true what I’ve feared. They said it was for our own good that we forget the horrors of the ‘80s. They said we chose this by popular vote. If they’re lying…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] Hush. You never know who’s listening. Besides, this isn’t proof. We write similar jargon in the truth sector.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] Propaganda you mean.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] It’s basically the same thing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] If you squint really hard.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] It doesn’t matter. What does matter is that this on its own means nothing, but is still too dangerous to keep. There is a burning day coming. You know what to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] Surely you can’t just go on meekly writing whatever they tell you to now?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] What choice do I have? As far as I know,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roberta. Ian watches in quiet horror, keeping his eyes trained high as though looking for cameras.

Grabs the paper off her

- All pairs slowly swap positions, so the smaller partner is now behind. The taller partner squats down in a wide plié so that the smaller partner can step up onto their thighs in a simple lift.

- On the word “wait”, the smaller partners jump down and make a joint pose with their partner.

By the end of this dialogue section, the partners have moved into a semi-circle behind
it’s the right thing to do. Have hope. Truth has a way of making itself known. [JULIA] But – [IAN] Find me some proof

Julia and Ian and have also swapped back so that the small performers are back in front. C/N are still on top of the box, but they too have swapped places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chorus 2</th>
<th>Leads</th>
<th>Ensemble</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[BOTH] Spiders spinning webs for us Tasty morsels, they play with us</td>
<td>Julia and Ian back gently into each other. As they slowly circle they both look around. Ian feels behind him and the two grasp hands gentle but neither notices the contact until they are facing one another.</td>
<td>- Each set of partners execute two deep pliés in second, guided by the motion of their hands which circle clockwise twice. At the end of this movement the weight transfers primarily to the right foot as they flow the masks on their hands forward and backwards one at a time. The same movement is repeated anti-clockwise and to the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] I pray for us [JULIA] I will keep dancing</td>
<td>- As Ian and Julia face one another the partners slowly retreat backwards into the dark and shadows, like spiders scuttling into the darkness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[IAN] Go.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. NO MORE WARS

This segment was predominantly comprised of staged movement, with some small elements which were more closely choreographed. It was divided into segments, with different members of the ensemble embodying different aspects of the lyrics, and of Roberta’s internal regrets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No More Wars</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lyrics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ROBERTA] A world of peace and freedom, A brand new world with no more wars Where no one is scared for their children A world where they aren’t begging on all fours</td>
<td>- As Roberta sings, an ensemble member furtively enters from downstage left with a bundle in their arms (perhaps a child?) and moves towards the upstage centre exit. Felicity greets them there and quickly escorts them out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In the instrumental segment between the first and second verse two more ensemble members enter from downstage right and head for the exit at centre stage left. One of them is old and walks very slowly, perhaps a mother and daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There's no price too high to pay</td>
<td>- On the final line of this verse the two women exit quickly, as though startled by the change in music. Two male ensemble members enter from upstage centre with their hands in their pockets and their heads down. There is a visual parallel here to Ian and Will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the sake of family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing I wouldn’t do, haven’t done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To see them living safe and happy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| So they don't recall their past                                             | - Man 1 walks to the beat, four counts and then freezes while Man 2 walks to the beat, for three counts. They repeat this action and then part ways. They move towards centre stage left and right respectively, pause to almost look back over their shoulders at each other, before exiting with a certain sense of dismissal for the strange feeling of familiarity. |
| So they don't know who I am                                                |                                                                                                               |
| So they pass me in the street                                               |                                                                                                               |
| As only a stranger can                                                      |                                                                                                               |
| So I won't miss what once was                                               |                                                                                                               |
| When there’s now a future of ‘can’                                         |                                                                                                               |
| I won't wish for any more                                                  |                                                                                                               |
| It’s my punishment for carrying out their plan                             |                                                                                                               |

| I will let my humanity go                                                  | - During the following verse a group of five angry Rebels enters from upstage right and cluster underneath Roberta’s office. |
| And embrace the greater good                                                |                                                                                                               |
| A world of peace and freedom                                               |                                                                                                               |
| Where I’m the bad guy, so I’m the bad guy                                  |                                                                                                               |
| Well someone should                                                        |                                                                                                               |

| Angry voices in the street                                                 | - In slow motion they prepare to throw projectiles, possibly rocks or bricks. |
| I can understand their pain                                                | - As the Voice of Orwell is lit up, the Rebels turn their heads as one. They exit at normal pace, startled. |
| I need to shut them out                                                    |                                                                                                               |
| Or this whole scheme                                                      |                                                                                                               |
| Will surely end up being in vain                                           |                                                                                                               |

| So they don't recall their past                                             | - Julia enters from centre stage left and heads towards the downstage right exit. She passes behind Roberta without seeing her, hesitates downstage right at the poster of Felicity and then leaves. |
| So they don't know who I am                                                |                                                                                                               |
| So they pass me in the street                                               |                                                                                                               |
| As only a stranger can                                                      |                                                                                                               |

| So no one who sees my face                                                 |                                                                                                               |
| Knows me truly as I am                                                    |                                                                                                               |
| This new person I’ll embrace                                               |                                                                                                               |
| It’s my punishment                                                        |                                                                                                               |
| For if I can’t, who can?                                                   |                                                                                                               |
ACT TWO

17. See Me

This is one of several numbers where the scrim is used to indicate the separation between memory and the present. As Julia engages with each of the characters/memories they are lit and come to life. Felicity with her cigarette, Ian with a bloodied bandage, Will crumbled and facing away. At the end of the number they seem to melt away into the shadows once more. While this number is not heavily choreographed in terms of specific dance movements or steps, the staged movement here did encompass part of my praxis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] I remember. You were there.</td>
<td>- Felicity is lit, in silhouette behind the scrim. She is stage right and facing full back. Julia moves her head over her shoulder but doesn’t look directly at the memory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing right there, cigarette in hand</td>
<td>- As Julia looks back to the front, she moves slightly stage right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were preaching against the new regulations, and you were free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free to be what you were. Which is not what you are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this farcical life of theirs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And you stood there ever ready with the signal to run for our lives</td>
<td>- Felicity raises the hand without the cigarette, as if in slow motion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Load of good that did us, we were marked like the others,</td>
<td>- Julia indicates her broken arm band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And we were free. Running and dying</td>
<td>- Felicity makes a signal with her hand and then slowly returns her hand to her side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With bombs exploding. And bullets flying</td>
<td>- Julia moves to centre stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes we were free. See me!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see it all: A world filled with horror and fear</td>
<td>- Julia moves as if to reach out and touch the memory of Felicity but draws back at the last second.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of hiding and tears. We were free.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free to fall. I see it all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now you can’t recall who you are</td>
<td>- Julia steps away from Felicity as she continues to sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here you stand, merely a shadow of what you were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And you’re safe. But you’re not free and I’ll never ever have to see</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You die with a bullet in your skull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will never recognise me at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can clearly see just how it will be this Felicity will smile and she will wave She’ll have to behave; their face and their doll I see. My Felicity is gone</td>
<td>- Felicity has turned full front by this stage but is still mostly in shadow. The cigarette is gone and she now raises her hand in slow motion, smiling and waving to an imagined audience of adoring OWC plebs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And this Ian will blunder through, trying his best, but not succeeding He was the leader of our coup Last I saw him, he was bleeding He won’t remember</td>
<td>- Lights up on Ian with a bloodied bandage on his robotic arm. Will stands stoic but apart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Will, lovely and so kind. Follower to
the bone,
Now you control our minds and sit up
on your throne
With the one behind it all, with her…
And yet I see you’re all happy, like I
was before
But you are not free though this life is
better, has more
Wealth and success, some memories
and happiness,
Two whole years’ worth. And who
knows what else lies in store?

It would be better if I just left just like
she left. No.
I see you all. And I must stay and
fight
I will stand tall to help you see who
you can be.

- Will reaches out and places a gentle
hand on Ian’s injured arm. A moment
of tenderness passes between them.

- As Roberta enters from stage left on
the word “her”, Ian and Will
automatically part. As Roberta
crosses from left to right, Will, Ian, and
Felicity nod to her and stand to
attention.

- Roberta exits stage right.

- The lights fade on Felicity, Ian, and
Will who are all standing to attention.
Julia is left alone.

20. I REMEMBER

As a memory sequence, this number also takes place behind the scrim. Three
performers appear as facsimiles of Julia, charting her growth from a small child
(J1) to an adolescent (J2) and finally to a young adult (J3). A fourth appears as
Roberta (R). Additional characters who appear include the Voice of Orwell and
one of law enforcement officers, neither of whom needed to have body doubles
for this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I REMEMBER</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20. I REMEMBER</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| [ROBERTA] I remember you were three You yearned to be a ballerina. You | - R enters from stage right as J1 does an unsteady pirouette. She reaches out for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pirouetted around the room for days. I smiled then.</th>
<th>J1’s hands and helps her to spin then the two hold holds.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[JULIA] I remember I was nine Dad was gone, an abyss opened up</td>
<td>- J1 freezes in situ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

379
| You sat in a dark room every night  
| Doors closed behind your eyes. I  
| couldn’t cry | looks hopefully at R as she crosses left. R pauses. J2 reaches out to her and then turns away as if in shame. |

| [ROBERTA] I remember  
| [JULIA] I remember  
| [ROBERTA] I remember when you cut your hair  
| [JULIA] How I hated it  
| [ROBERTA] It suited you  
| [JULIA] It got me through  
| [ROBERTA/JULIA] I remember | - J3 slowly draws her hands up her body and then drags them down over her head. R watches her.  
- J3 throws her hands down. R reaches out to brush her hair from her face. J3 leans into it, almost bashful. R finishes her cross to stage left, holding hands with J3 for as long as she can. J1 and J2 both stand and turn, reaching out for R as she exits stage left. |

| [JULIA] I remember the day you sold us out  
| I was mad. I couldn’t dance, I couldn’t cry.  
| I still don’t know why. I want to know why  
| [ROBERTA] I remember I longed to save us all  
| You were brave. I could never be that brave  
| So I chose to live. But I wanted you to live | - J1, J2, and J3 embody Julia’s rage here with a series of jerky, spasmodic movements.  
- J1, J2, and J3 release from their contractions, slowly turn to full front and drop into a crouch where they then freeze in place. |

| [JULIA] It never went that way  
| [ROBERTA] Well, what do you expect me to say?  
| You weren’t there that day  
| You were dancing. Your body controlled. And I was not there  
| [JULIA] You were plotting against us all  
| [ROBERTA] I could not let you fall | - J1, J2, and L3 slowly rise from their crouch, their hands dangling in front of them. The impression is of a limp ragdoll slowly standing up and turning to face stage right. |

| [JULIA] Your drones kept coming, rounding up the sheep  
| They walked willingly to slaughter  
| [ROBERTA] They went willingly to sleep. They dream of a life  
| With no war and no killing. Most of them willing  
| [JULIA] Not me. I could never do what you did  
| [ROBERTA] Nor could I. I didn’t try to run  
| I too went willingly last December  
| I begged them, make me forget  
| But now I’ve been cursed to remember… | - A law enforcement officer enters from stage right with the Voice of Orwell. As she walks past, J1, J2, and J3 have now become the general populace and they slump over one at a time as they are memory wiped. They step down off the boxes, unlock the wheels and then exit through upstage centre.  
- R re-enters from stage left and goes to her knees, offering up her arm for a wipe band. The law enforcement officer and the Voice of Orwell step forward and regard her for a moment, then exit stage right. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JULIA</th>
<th>Don't tell me you regret. You made your choice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROBERTA</td>
<td>I don't regret saving you Don't regret giving you the world My one regret is losing you... not choosing you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULIA</td>
<td>I remember I was scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBERTA</td>
<td>I was weak and unprepared And I'll do what it takes for my mistakes to be repaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULIA</td>
<td>let everyone go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBERTA</td>
<td>No. They went willingly. This world is a ballerina, fragile yet controlled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULIA</td>
<td>I don't want to be controlled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBERTA</td>
<td>You don't know what they will do Remember, I've been cursed to remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>At this point the lights behind the scrim dim and R exits stage left in preparation for the scrim to be flown in the next scene.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review of 2084: A Musical

The review that follows was written by a local Perth theatre enthusiast who has written numerous theatre reviews for a variety of local Perth productions over several decades. Although his reflections on specific plot points are not always entirely accurate, Gordon’s reviews almost always provide interesting insight due to his long background in film and television. I have included it here specifically for his comments on the choreography.

‘2084 – A Musical’ reviewed by Gordon the Optom (Gordon the Optom, 2016)
August 29, 2016

‘2084 – A Musical’ is brand new work from Sarah Courtis and Ellin Sears as part of their PhD theses. Sarah Courtis’ lyrics and script by were inspired by George Orwell’s masterpiece, ‘1984’; the innovative music was then added by composer and musical director, Nick Choo, then the inventive choreography created by Ellin Sears.

This lively dramatic production can be seen for three nights only at the Nexus Theatre, at Murdoch University, 90 South Street, Murdoch on Thursday, Friday and Saturday night at 7.00, until 20th August.

The scene is the exercise yard of a compound owned by ‘One World Corporation’. Limestone walls topped with barbed wire (Designer Allison Bell almost single handed constructed and painted this very realistic set. She had some assistance from John Bailey) surround the area. Overlooking the area is the promotions manager’s office. On a higher level (almost in the lighting grid) stands George Orwell.

At each side of the stage was a TV monitor showing Supervisor Felicity and the sufferings of Julia (Filming by Taylor Gilbert, AV by Blearnard Suarez).

Visible through chinks in the rear limestone wall are the musicians. On Keyboard – Kenn Ellis and Nick Ireland, Cello – Caitlyn Harrison, Drums – Liam Richer, Bass – Chris Heindl, Guitar – Mike Gorman and Trombone – Ned Holland.
A slick show, thanks to Production Manager Thomas Dimmick with his fast and efficient team, under Stage Manager Brianna Lea, who was assisted by Tijana Simich.

The curtains rise to show us a smartly dressed woman, Roberta (Cat Perez), with a bejewelled pendant of an ever-watching eye around her neck. The ‘eye’ is the symbol of the ‘One World Corporation’ that is having a Memory Day Celebration. Roberta has a small computer attached to her scalp, which, like her armband glows with a blue light (Props, Dean Lovatt). It appears she is in great discomfort from the flickering head unit.

The celebrations begin with a line of tap-dancing girls, dressed in black leotards and sporting lime green top hats. On the back of their costumes, once again, is the big brother eye. As they finish their routine, the smiles disappear as the hoodies with black masks, under the command of security chief, Will (Will Moriarty) move in and capture the performers. Next time we see the dancers they are wearing armbands and are now ‘committed’ members of the Corporation. The Corporation believes in ‘one voice’ for the benefit of all.

When Ian Winston’s (Launcelot Ronzan) armband flashes, it means that the power is low and the brainwashing propaganda is not reaching his mind. As a result, Ian, who is Head of Propaganda, seems to be having doubt as to the ethics of his job in this fragile world, as the inmates are like zombies or automatons, void of expression.

For some unknown reason, one of the Corporation’s members, Julia (Deirdre Khoo), seems to get preferential treatment – this forces Felicity (Rebecca Dilley) the supreme supervisor who looks after the women’s ‘welfare’, to pick on her.

On high, dressed in a full-length black leather coat, is the omnipotent Orwell, the creator of the Corporation. When Orwell notices that some of the team are rebelling, she sends in her Assistant (Michael Casas).

With the activated armbands fading rapidly on many of the inmates, and with the brain-washing power fading, could this be their chance for a revolution?

The versatile Ensemble comprised – Tay Broadley, Justin Crossley, Bella Doyle, Andrew Haning, Andrea Kendrick, Abbey McCaughan, Claire Mosel, Ellin Sears,
Gema Seenarain, Ashleigh Spring, Clare Talbot, Sean Wcislo, Nashy MZ. This ensemble is [sic] includes drama / acting students, but in support of their PhD student friends, they were happy to take themselves out of their comfort zones by singing and dancing with gusto. The dancers may not have been quite top rate, and some singers lacking a little in vocal range, but the performers gave the play everything that they could. Many congratulations.

Sarah Courtis in writing the script and lyrics has produced a most interesting storyline, with great dialogue and engrossing lyrics; but what I found most ingenious was her ability to carry through Orwell’s original style of writing. Along with Sarah’s imaginative directing, the lyrics clearly encompassed the bullying by the supervisors, such as Will’s intimidation and the wonderfully powerful, gritty tones of Roberta (Cat Perez). In a variety of musical styles, a couple of scenes later there were a couple of soft, heartrending songs by Julia (Deidre Khoo).

Choreographer Ellin Sears skilfully gave us the ‘big show opening’ with the bright, bouncy tap chorus. Soon the joyful atmosphere turned to one of drama, as the cast became antagonistic inmates, stomping through a song. There was a delightful ballet scene, rapidly followed by a revolutionary march that could match ‘Les Miserables’ in its threatening power. There followed a tricky Busby Berkeley-style concentric circle dance routine which worked very well.

Nick Choo conducted his musicians through his clever compositions, with carefully selected instruments to match the mood. One scene had staccato strings; next there was the pounding, full power of the band that almost achieved orchestral richness with the limited instruments. Clever arrangement.

The lighting was well considered by Lighting Designer, Katie Southwell and smoothly operated by Shannon Precious. The Sound Design was the work of Christian Mulchinock and operated by Corina Brown. Achieving a balance for a band packed into a small enclosed space, coupled with controlling the dreaded headsets for the lead singers was no mean task. Both worked perfectly, well done.

The final touch to this fast moving drama was the costumes, audaciously designed by Jenia Gladziejewski, Ellin Sears and Sarah Courtis. It would have been easy to just have the dancers in standard black leotards, but the extra ‘eye adornment’ made them relevant to the story. Inventive little touches, like Ian’s
leather gauntlet and the ghostly white mask dance gave the show a big budget look – whist being produced on a shoestring.

I learnt afterwards that the show had minimal rehearsal time, and yet the product that was delivered was most professional. A clever show that hit all of the senses.
Bibliography


https://majortominor.wordpress.com/2018/10/30/how-will-jukebox-musicals-age/


doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REM62-1


