

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

CATCHING UP WITH *CABARET*:  
FINDING DEEPER MEANING IN A NEVER-ENDING ADAPTATION

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

By

MATTHEW DAVID REYNOLDS  
Norman, Oklahoma  
2022

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A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Michael Lee, Chair

Dr. Elizabeth Avery

Dr. Leslie John Flanagan

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Jo Ann Miller, who passed away in August 2021. She had a song for everything and was the wisest person that I have ever known. I miss her every day.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Throughout the writing of this thesis, as well as my entire time at the University of Oklahoma, I have received a great deal of support and assistance. It would be impossible to name every individual who contributed to my academic and personal success in the last three years, but nonetheless, I am endlessly grateful to any all who helped me get to this point.

I would first like to thank Dr. Michael Lee, the chair of my committee and my research advisor for this thesis, whose guidance, patience, and feedback was instrumental to the completion of this document. I am a much better person and musicologist for having worked with you, Dr. Lee, and I am forever grateful for your insights and your tutelage.

I would also like to thank the other two members of my committee, Dr. Elizabeth Avery and Dr. Leslie John Flanagan, for their mentorship and support throughout my time at the University of Oklahoma. I cherish both of you immensely, and I thank you for believing in me and pushing me to become a better artist and student.

I could not have completed this journey without the unconditional love and support from my family, particularly my mother and my brother. Mom, thank you for always offering a listening ear and for making me laugh when I needed it most. Andrew, thank you for helping me to clarify my thoughts and for taking my mind off research when I needed a break. I would never have achieved any of this without the two of you.

Finally, I'd like to thank every friend, in Norman and elsewhere, for their encouragement and belief in me. I could not have done this without you all.

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## ABSTRACT

*Cabaret*, a 1966 Broadway musical with book by Joe Masteroff and music and lyrics by John Kander and Fred Ebb, and the 1972 film of the same name, directed by Bob Fosse, have been subjects of considerable scholarly research in the genre of American musical theater. This is a result of the *Cabaret*'s status as an early foray into the subgenre of the concept, or modernist, musical. Written and produced as a response to the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the musical was a genre-pushing piece of theater that utilized its musical numbers in a unique, commentarial fashion and challenged audiences with its upheaval of conventions. Over the nearly sixty years since its original inception, *Cabaret* has also undergone an abundant number of alterations to its book and score, making it an even more distinctive entry in the relatively young musical theater genre.

The scholarly discourse regarding *Cabaret*, while vast, focuses predominantly on its position as an early example of the concept/modernist musical subgenre. What is lacking in the research surrounding *Cabaret* is a deeper discussion of its extensive adaptive history, and the means by which its narrative and musical modifications over time have allowed for the show's central messages to become increasingly refined and unflinching. Subsequently, the goal of this study is to more fully analyze these specific changes in context and to illuminate their effects on the potency of *Cabaret*'s story and themes. In addition, this research will consider *Cabaret*'s evolution over time and its historical trajectory that favors process over product to offer a new distinction for the show: it is not only one of the first concept/modernist musicals, but it is also Broadway's first postmodern musical. When considering the Broadway landscape over the course of



the last decade, during which time a number of beloved musicals have experienced transformative and reimagined revivals, it is clear that *Cabaret*'s established template of consistent readaptation paved the way for this modern trend. Due in large part to its ever-evolving nature, *Cabaret* has asserted itself as a monumental piece of American musical theater, and its considerable impact on the genre has persisted.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, the Broadway musical finds itself at a familiar crossroads, where the standard and familiar meet the innovative and reimagined. One needs only to consider recent lineups of musical productions on the Great White Way to see this juxtaposition at play. In 2019 and 2020, a deconstructed adaptation of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* experienced a wildly successful run at the Circle in the Square Theatre as it brought a reimagined vision to the beloved folk musical, depicting its traditionally charming characters as angry, violent, and overtly sexual human beings in a disenfranchised middle America. On the other hand, just around the corner from *Oklahoma!*'s previous home, the first-ever Broadway revival of Jule Styne and Isobel Lennart's 1964 musical, *Funny Girl*, premiered this year at the August Wilson Theatre. December 2021 saw the official opening of the highly awaited gender-bent revival of Stephen Sondheim's *Company* at the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre, offering new perspectives and commentary on marriage, bachelordom, and love through the lens of a female protagonist, rather than the conventional male-led production. Two months later, an equally anticipated – and far more star-studded – revival of Meredith Wilson's *The Music Man* gave its first performances at the Winter Garden Theatre, only five blocks from the subversive spin on Sondheim's classic show.

This dichotomy between the two Broadways is nothing new: since the 1960s, Broadway has managed to maintain a delicate and difficult balance as it simultaneously clings to the nostalgic shows of old while still looking forward, seeking new methods and producing new musicals that continue to push the envelope and serve to reevaluate the industry's status. However, the pattern of groundbreaking original musicals such as

2016's *Hamilton*, the hip-hop phenomenon in which actors of color portray a reimagined account of the American founding fathers, and 2019's *Hadestown*, a modern retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice through a New Orleans jazz influence, feels distinct from this novel trend of altered revivals of celebrated musicals like *Oklahoma!* and *Company*. Furthermore, the rise of the reexamined musical adaptation brings a newfound level of potency to the conversation – or perhaps, schism – between the past-preserving and the past-reshaping Broadways.

Although there has been a recent uptick in readapted and reimagined revivals of beloved Broadway musicals, the roots of this movement date back to over fifty years ago, beginning with Harold Prince's production of a new and revolutionary piece of theatre: *Cabaret*. Often regarded as one of the first concept, or modernist, musicals, the 1966 Broadway production of *Cabaret* turned the musical genre on its head as it presented musical numbers that did not advance the plot, but rather, offered commentary and metaphor on the show's central themes.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, *Cabaret*'s exceedingly heavy and depressing subject matter, which depicts the increasing anxiety in Berlin's social and political climate leading up to World War II, was a radical change for the genre at the time. Given its thematic content and nontraditional structure, *Cabaret* was a show that immediately took Broadway audiences by storm. Over the course of its nearly sixty-year history, *Cabaret* has maintained its ability to shock and astonish audiences, despite its more familiar status in the canon of American musical theater. This stems from what is

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Miller defines the concept musical – also referred to as the modernist musical – as “a show in which the story is secondary to a central message or metaphor” (27). For further reading, see: Scott Miller, *From Assassins to West Side Story: The Director's Guide to Musical Theatre*, (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996).

most intriguing about *Cabaret*'s position in the oeuvre of the Broadway musical genre: the fluidity of its book and score over time.

Since *Cabaret*'s genesis in the mid-1960s, the show's narrative events and musical numbers have undergone drastic modifications, resulting in markedly different iterations of the musical, ranging from the original Broadway production in 1966, to Bob Fosse's film adaptation in 1972, all the way to subsequent revivals in 1987, 1998, and beyond. Unlike the vast majority of Broadway musicals, *Cabaret* consistently engages in conversation with itself, searching for increased depth and meaning, and discovering stronger, more sophisticated methods to convey its themes to new audiences. In the second edition of his book, *The Making of Cabaret*, Keith Garebian notes that *Cabaret*'s metamorphosis over time demonstrates just how profoundly the show "could bear reinterpretations that seek to release levels of meaning and feeling not usually explored in a commercial enterprise."<sup>2</sup> *Cabaret*'s willingness to question and reinvent itself and, subsequently, its status as a never-ending adaptation is fundamental to its profound effects on the American musical theater genre, and is largely responsible for its unwavering effectiveness in conveying its themes and messages to audiences across time. In a genre that is often rooted in tradition, and in which various shows remain the same over time, *Cabaret*'s extensive history of adaptation and reimagination has proven time and time again that it was a musical far ahead of its era. Additionally, considering the increase in innovative productions of conventional works of musical theater in recent years, it is clear that *Cabaret* is a foundational text that laid the groundwork for the

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Garebian, *The Making of Cabaret*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), xiii.

Broadway trends of today. Over half a century since its inception, perhaps the Broadway industry, and society as a whole, has finally caught up with *Cabaret*.

Despite its well-established track record of reinvention, a majority of the discourse surrounding *Cabaret*'s lasting impact on American musical theater focuses on its status as an early foray into the concept/modernist musical genre, as well as its weighty and grim subject matter. Identifying this musical in such a way, while certainly appropriate, feels incomplete, and is in need of further interrogation; in studying *Cabaret* through the lens of its ever-evolving nature, as a deeply process-oriented artistic endeavor that is less concerned with product, a more holistic and accurate label presents itself as a possibility – not only is *Cabaret* and undeniably modernist musical, but it is also the industry's first truly postmodern musical. The goal of this study is not only to suggest the potential reframing of *Cabaret*'s style and genre as postmodern, but to do so through dissecting the myriad changes that the musical text has undergone over the course of its existence, and discussing how these alterations function to reinforce the show's central themes and messages. In establishing the dynamic nature of *Cabaret*'s narrative and musical elements, it becomes clear that it has paved the way for a new class of reinvented Broadway classics.

Chapter One will serve as a literature review, outlining *Cabaret*'s plot and adaptive timeline, as well as discussing specific changes to the musical's book and score between its adaptations. Chapters Two and Three will contain analyses of the added and altered musical numbers in *Cabaret*, centering on how these deviations from previous versions of the show work to alter and enhance its thematic material, character development, and plot focus. The conclusion will consider these changes to propose that

*Cabaret*, in addition to being a strong and early entry into the concept/modernist subgenre, has evolved into the industry's first postmodern musical. Additionally, this final section will revisit *Cabaret*'s position as a precursor to the reimagined musical revivals of present-day Broadway, and will offer recommendations for future research into *Cabaret*'s adaptive history and the American musical theater genre as a whole.

# CHAPTER 1. *CABARET*'S ADAPTIVE AND CRITICAL HISTORY

*Cabaret*'s unique position in the canon of Broadway musicals derives not only from its atypical subject matter for the genre, but also from the fact that the innerworkings of the show's book, by Joe Masteroff, and score, by John Kander and Fred Ebb, have been so dynamic over its fifty-six-year history. Despite the establishment of common interpretations and performance practices associated with *Cabaret* today, it is a musical that literally exists in multiple written forms. In his 2016 article for *Playbill*, Logan Culwell-Block remarks that "there is no definitive version of the piece; the original Broadway production, 1987 revival, and 1998 revival versions of the book and score are all currently available for performance by stock and amateur companies."<sup>3</sup> The cycle of revision that defines *Cabaret* further distinguishes it within the musical theater genre, and may offer an explanation into its versatility across different media; it is a musical text that feels equally at home on the stage, as a feature-length film, or even as a hilariously poignant plot device, as depicted in the popular sitcom, *Schitt's Creek*.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, however, tracking *Cabaret*'s structure over its relatively young theatrical history becomes a fascinating and necessary, not to mention difficult, challenge due to its numerous iterations.

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<sup>3</sup> Logan Culwell-Block, "50 Years of *Cabaret*: The Surprisingly Transformative Journey of a Classic," *Playbill*, Playbill, Inc., November 20, 2016, <https://www.playbill.com/article/50-years-of-cabaret-the-surprisingly-transformative-journey-of-a-classic>.

<sup>4</sup> *Schitt's Creek*, season 5, episode 14, "Life is a Cabaret," directed by Andrew Cividino and Dan Levy, written by Dan Levy, Eugene Levy, and Pavan Moondi, featuring Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, Dan Levy, and Annie Murphy, aired April 19, 2019, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, <https://www.netflix.com/watch/81092818>.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a survey of *Cabaret*'s adaptive history and, more specifically, establish the distinctions between the major versions of the musical since its original Broadway production in 1966. This review of existing literature on *Cabaret* will cover the following topics: an outline of *Cabaret*'s plot, the methods by which the original production defied the normative aspects of the Broadway musical at the time, critical and general reactions to the musical's initial production, and discussions of its narrative and musical changes over time. This will aid in establishing the overall timeline and trajectory of *Cabaret*'s lifespan thus far, and will provide the context necessary to contribute a more thorough and effective analysis of the specific alterations to *Cabaret*'s score since its genesis. Furthermore, this examination will lay the foundation for the argument that *Cabaret*, despite its modernist attributes, has become the American musical's first truly postmodern work over the course of its nearly sixty-year history. While the source materials on which *Cabaret* was first adapted – Christopher Isherwood's 1939 autobiographical novella, *Goodbye to Berlin*, and its 1951 play adaptation, *I Am a Camera* by John Van Druten – will factor into the establishment of the musical's development since its original inception, any emphasis on these pieces will be entirely in the context of *Cabaret*'s progression as a musical text. The central focus of this discussion will be the three major Broadway productions of *Cabaret* – the original production in 1966, the first revival in 1987, and the second revival in 1998 – as well as Bob Fosse's film adaptation in 1972.

Elizabeth Wollman, a renowned scholar of American musical theater, summarizes *Cabaret*'s plot, as depicted in its original Broadway production in 1966, in her book, *A Critical Companion to the American Stage Musical*:



The plot structure of *Cabaret*, which follows two couples, hearkens back to the Rodgers and Hammerstein model. The primary coupling consists of Clifford Bradshaw, an American writer who has come to Berlin to write a novel, and Sally Bowles, a British nightclub singer who works at the Kit Kat Klub, a gritty cabaret. An amoral party girl, Sally initially resists Cliff's advances, only to appear on his doorstep in hopes that he will let her share the boarding-house room he rents from Fraulein Schneider. Meanwhile, the widowed Schneider is courted by Herr Schultz, a Jewish grocer who also rents one of her rooms. As the couples fall in love, Berlin's political climate grows darker.<sup>5</sup>

While the parallel couplings of Cliff and Sally and Herr Schultz and Fraulein Schneider are the initial entry points to *Cabaret*'s story and structure, Wollman's final words describing Berlin's descent into madness offer the true throughline of the show. Additionally, this description offers a glimpse into the methods by which *Cabaret* goes against the grain, challenging the normative aspects of musicals of the time: the formation and success of a romantic relationship between a man and a woman as the central plot device, the function of musical numbers to advance the story and, more specifically, express the characters' individual and collective joy, and dissolving the line between dialogue and the diegetic musical numbers.<sup>6</sup> The placement of couples, which traditionally provided the narrative and thematic foundation within musicals of the time, against the backdrop of the ever-darkening political and social landscapes of Weimar-era Berlin allows *Cabaret* to operate in an elusive manner, as it diverts the attention of the audience from the show's sinister underbelly. The elements of these romantic narratives, in a way, lure *Cabaret*'s spectators into a false sense of security because they are familiar, allowing the emergence of the musical's darker messages, as well as the eventual failure of both romantic couplings, to be all the more devastating.

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<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth L. Wollman, *A Critical Companion to the American Stage Musical*, (New York: Bloomsbury), 2017, 147-148.

<sup>6</sup> Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 1987, 108-110.

The central premise of the show comes into view through this juxtaposition between cheerful and bleak, between fantasy and reality, and its additional structures – particularly, the setting and musical numbers – work to reinforce this jarring balance. A majority of the central plot events in *Cabaret* take place outside the walls of the Kit Kat Klub, and are often interrupted by performances by the club’s Master of Ceremonies and his accompanying chorus. As a result, a majority of the show’s musical numbers exist separately from the narrative and are not bound by the traditional dissolve between dialogue and musical performance.<sup>7</sup> Through this mechanism, the Emcee and cabaret performers function as “both a detached chorus and a character in the story,” not only interrupting, but also commenting on the drama of the show; even Sally Bowles’s performances within the Kit Kat Klub behave in this manner, despite her position as one of the leading players in *Cabaret*’s main storyline.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the separation of these club performances from the story itself allows the songs to exist for the sole purpose of entertainment. Offering a further layer of distraction, these musical numbers lead on-lookers to enjoy the playfulness and liberation within the Kit Kat Klub, providing the characters within the show as well as the real-life audience “refuge from the gathering political storm just outside its doors.”<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, these attributes are at the core of *Cabaret*’s widely accepted status as a modernist/concept musical. Gerald Mast writes that *Cabaret*, “like every successful modernist musical...must have it both ways – preserving

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<sup>7</sup> Altman, 109.

<sup>8</sup> Garebian, x.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Mast, *Can't Help Singin': The American Musical on Stage and Screen*, (New York: The Overlook Press), 1987, 321.

the fun of musical performance while commenting on a disturbing social phenomenon.”<sup>10</sup>

What better way to achieve Mast’s proposed balance than through the pairing of musical theater norms – rousing musical numbers, stimulating choreography, charming romantic endeavors – with the rise of the Nazi regime in Berlin during the early 1930s?

Audiences for the earliest productions of *Cabaret* ranged from impressed and enamored to entirely flummoxed due to its unusual structure and subject matter. Joe Masteroff noted that he was shocked that the show became a hit at all, recounting early performances of *Cabaret* during its pre-Broadway run in Boston in 1966:

The reason was that audiences really didn’t know what to expect at that point. The name of the show was *Cabaret*, and they expected it to be a normal kind of Broadway musical. Within ten minutes, they had seen these not-so-great-looking chorus girls, and the show seemed to be a little on the grim side, and people began trooping up the aisles. Believe me, we were all very depressed about it! It wasn’t a cheerful time at all...<sup>11</sup>

The modernist aspects of *Cabaret*, particularly its depressing thematic material, made it a difficult, even inaccessible, piece of theater for some spectators. Martin Gottfried notes that, given *Cabaret*’s status as an early venture into a brand-new sub-genre of musical, the musical was “a schizophrenic show. One-half of it was an orthodox musical play whose story unfolded in dramatic scenes with duly integrated book songs. The other half, however, startled and changed Broadway.”<sup>12</sup> As Gottfried indicates, while a number were turned off by *Cabaret*’s startling nature by 1960s standards, the critical and public responses to the musical were largely positive. Notably, Walter Kerr of *The New York*

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<sup>10</sup> Mast, 324.

<sup>11</sup> Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., *Broadway Song & Story: Playwrights, Lyricists, Composers Discuss Their Hits*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.), 1985, 143.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Gottfried, *Broadway Musicals*, (New York: Abradale Press), 1984, 29.

*Times* called it “stunning,” and had particular praise for the “sprightly, high-voltage energy” of John Kander and Fred Ebb’s music and lyrics.<sup>13</sup> Despite the widespread acclaim – which eventually culminated in eight Tony Awards out of thirteen nominations – a number of critics undervalued the pertinence of *Cabaret*’s story at the time. Producer and director of the original production, Harold Prince, was originally drawn to the story due to its haunting similarities to the deeply rooted racial inequities and atrocities in American culture, and found it to be a particularly applicable parallel during the Civil Rights Movement at the time; thus, he aimed to “transform some stories of life in Berlin around 1930 into a cautionary tale for the United States in the 1960s.”<sup>14</sup> John Bush Jones writes that

[w]ithout ever leaving Germany, and largely through the two love stories, *Cabaret* powerfully drives home its parallels between the Nazi agenda and racism in the contemporary United States. This musical wake-up call to Americans about ‘how it can happen here’ illustrates well how an issue-driven musical can still be successful for its entertainment value thanks to a co-equal merger of story and theme.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of this rather overt parallel between *Cabaret* and its intended audience, “none of the New York reviewers in 1966 took the trouble to compare the milieu of the musical with that of contemporary America.”<sup>16</sup> The on-stage “dangerous, frivolous and misguided age” that critics discussed in great detail managed to stay separate from the age and

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Kerr, “The Theater: ‘Cabaret’ Opens at the Broadhurst,” *The New York Times* (New York), November 21, 1966.

<sup>14</sup> John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*, (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England), 2003, 241.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, 242.

<sup>16</sup> Randy Clark, “Bending the Genre: The Stage and Screen Versions of ‘Cabaret’,” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1991), 58.

location in which *Cabaret* premiered.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the cultural moment in which *Cabaret* first premiered was not quite ready for the themes it presented, for its intended role as a “wake-up call” for society. This, however, is where *Cabaret*’s evolution begins. Going forward, *Cabaret* would find new and different methods by which to convey its messages, both in major changes to the narrative structure and to the score. Tracking the alterations to the story through the lenses of the romantic liaisons, Cliff Bradshaw’s sexuality, and the reinvention of the character of Sally Bowles offers the clearest picture of *Cabaret*’s progression from its first Broadway production to its subsequent adaptations.

Across the three versions of Joe Masteroff’s book for the stage, *Cabaret*’s central couples remain the same: the courtship between the American Cliff Bradshaw and the British Sally Bowles coincides with that of Herr Schultz and Fraulein Schneider. In a number of ways, this doomed romance between a Jewish tenant and the manager of the boarding house where he resides acts as the emotional core of *Cabaret*; their finding love late in life will come to an unavoidable end, not because they are wrong for each other but because society begins to crumble around them, leading Fraulein Schneider to make the decision to end their relationship to protect herself.<sup>18</sup> In the 1972 film version, however, director Bob Fosse, screenwriter Jay Allen, and research consultant Hugh Wheeler made major changes to the romances at the center of *Cabaret*’s story. The alterations to Cliff and Sally’s relationship are admittedly slight – Cliff, renamed Brian Roberts, hails from Britain, while Sally is an American. The overall trajectory of their

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<sup>17</sup> Richard P. Cooke, “Princely Entertainment,” *The Wall Street Journal* (New York), November 22, 1966.

<sup>18</sup> Joe Masteroff and Fred Ebb, *Cabaret*, (New York: Random House), 1967, 89-90.

relationship remains consistent with that of the stage musical. On the other hand, however, the secondary couple of Schultz and Schneider is completely absent from the narrative events of Fosse's film, thus excluding two of *Cabaret's* main characters. In their place lies the unlikely pairing of Fritz Wendel, a womanizer who keeps his Jewish identity a secret for much of the film, with Natalia Landauer, a virtuous Jewish heiress, both of whom take English lessons from Brian.<sup>19</sup> This romantic subplot was not taken from Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, and is not at all present in the stage adaptation of *Cabaret*. Rather, it was added to the film from John Van Druten's play, *I Am a Camera*.<sup>20</sup> Although subsequent stage productions of *Cabaret* maintained the show's original romantic couples, the coupling of Fritz and Natalia offers an entirely new presentation of a Jewish romance in early 1930s Berlin. Their relationship represents the lone successful coupling of the bunch, and their marriage in the film serves as one of the single hopeful narrative aspects of *Cabaret*. Nonetheless, the public knowledge of their shared Jewish heritage within the film leads the audience to their own conclusions, and much like the adjacent dramatic arcs, as well as that of Herr Schultz and Fraulein Schneider in the stage production, Fritz and Natalia's fates are almost certainly bleak.

The equivalent characters of Cliff Bradshaw and Brian Roberts receive markedly different treatments across *Cabaret's* history, specifically with regard to his sexual identity. This character is a "thinly-veiled stand-in" for Christopher Isherwood, a gay man, who remains in the closet in the original Broadway production.<sup>21</sup> Considering the

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<sup>19</sup> *Cabaret*, directed by Bob Fosse (1972; Los Angeles, CA: Warner Home Video, 2013), Blu-ray.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Isherwood, "Christopher Isherwood on Day at Night, with James Day," interview by James Day, *Day at Night*, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) CUNY TV, April 25, 1974.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Gray, "50 years of 'Cabaret': How the 1966 musical keeps sharpening its edges for modern times," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles), July 20, 2016.

already scandalous nature of the show, combined with general opinions of homosexuality at the time coming out of the Pink Scare, the decision to closet Cliff was likely a result of fear within the producers to portray the homosexual “suggestions of the Isherwood stories.”<sup>22</sup> Merely six years after the first performance of Broadway’s *Cabaret*, though, Fosse, Allen, and Wheeler’s interpretation of this character introduces same-sex attraction into the conversation. In the film, Brian is, at the very least, a bi-curious Englishman and, at most, overtly bisexual. While his relationship with Liza Minnelli’s Sally Bowles remains the central plot device of the film, Brian experiments with same-sex relationships through his “screwing” of Maximilian von Heune, a rich baron whose character is also taken exclusively from Van Druten’s *I Am a Camera*.<sup>23</sup> Subsequent Broadway revivals incorporated the film’s relative embrace of the Isherwood character’s sexuality: while the 1987 Broadway revival transferred Brian’s bisexuality in the film into Cliff’s characterization on stage, the 1998 revival and following stage productions portray Cliff as a man “gathering the courage to express himself in a brief window of freedom,” incorporating added scenes that make his sexual exploration more explicit and more closely mirroring Isherwood’s sexuality.<sup>24</sup> Within the story, these added scenes and the general welcoming of Cliff’s sexual identity reinforce the understanding that his relationship with Sally was most likely “his first (and probably last) heterosexual affair.”<sup>25</sup> Additionally, the added scenes have allowed the recently reimagined versions of

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<sup>22</sup> Mast, 322.

<sup>23</sup> *Cabaret*, Fosse.

<sup>24</sup> Gray, *Los Angeles Times*.

<sup>25</sup> Mast, 322.

*Cabaret* to continue to push the envelope, depicting increasingly risqué moments for public audiences. Outside of the confines of the stage, though, this increased openness towards the sexuality of *Cabaret*'s male lead mirrors the general shifts in societal attitudes towards sex in general, but particularly homosexuality.<sup>26</sup> These attitudes have permeated through *Cabaret*'s life on stage as well, as recent productions have placed their characters – particularly the Emcee and cabaret singers – in increasingly scantily clad costumes, and have had them engage in more explicit sexual simulations.

Just as the stand-in character for Christopher Isherwood has experienced immense change over the course of *Cabaret*'s history, so too has the now iconic role of Sally Bowles. Sally was a minor character in *Goodbye to Berlin*, and as a result, Joe Masteroff and Harold Prince “were not interested in developing [her] role as a star vehicle, or even as an important part.”<sup>27</sup> True to Isherwood's depiction of Sally in *Goodbye to Berlin*, the original production of *Cabaret* aimed to keep Sally's musical abilities to a minimum; as such, Kander and Ebb fashioned the score to achieve this goal, giving Sally only three numbers total – two onstage at the Kit Kat Klub, and one offstage.<sup>28</sup> This approach to Sally feels inconceivable today, given the character's emergence as one of the most recognizable roles in any Broadway musical. Ultimately, it was Fosse's film adaptation that turned this original conception of Sally on its head and allowed her to morph into the familiar character she is today. In the film, Liza Minnelli's Sally Bowles introduces Brian and, subsequently, the audience to Berlin's “world of dropped inhibition and sexual

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<sup>26</sup> Gray, *Los Angeles Times*.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Mizejewski, *Divine Decadence: Fascism, Female Spectacle, and the Makings of Sally Bowles*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1992, 163.

<sup>28</sup> Clark, 55.



expression,” and she ultimately becomes the medium through which the culture of Weimar-era Berlin comes to life.<sup>29</sup> A far cry from the minor character in Isherwood’s novella and from the relatively inconsequential romantic interest in the original Broadway production, Fosse allows Liza Minnelli to infuse Sally with a newfound star quality, transforming her into an anti-archetypal heroine unlike any leading lady in the previously existing canon of Broadway musicals and into a role worthy of an Academy Award. Beyond affecting her place as the narrative center of *Cabaret*’s story, Sally’s transformation from the stage to the film adaptation resulted in “the most sweeping changes to the score,” as new musical numbers were written and incorporated into Sally’s character development.<sup>30</sup> Future stage productions of *Cabaret* welcomed this new Sally Bowles with open arms, and today’s traditional productions of the show include the added musical numbers for her character.

Undoubtedly, Sally Bowles is the character most reflected in *Cabaret*’s ever-changing score, but the additional alterations are not of lesser importance. Table 1.1, included below, denotes *Cabaret*’s musical numbers and the characters who perform them, as per the original version of the musical in 1966.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 1.1 – List of Songs in the Original Broadway Production of *Cabaret***

Musical Numbers	Characters
<u>Act I:</u>	
1. “Wilkommen”	1. Emcee and Company
2. “So What?”	2. Fraulein Schneider
3. “Don’t Tell Mama”	3. Sally and Girls
4. “Telephone Song”	4. The Company
5. “Perfectly Marvelous”	5. Cliff and Sally
6. “Two Ladies	6. Emcee and Two Ladies

<sup>29</sup> Mizejewski, 209.

<sup>30</sup> Clark, 55.

<sup>31</sup> Masteroff and Ebb, 1967.

7. "It Couldn't Please Me More" 8. "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" 9. "Why Should I Wake Up?" 10. "The Money Song/Sitting Pretty" 11. "Married"  12. "Meeskite" 13. "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" (Reprise)	7. Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz 8. Emcee and Waiters 9. Cliff 10. Emcee and the Cabaret Girls 11. Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz 12. Herr Schultz 13. Fraulein Kost, Ernst, and Guests
<u>Act II:</u> 1. "Married" (Reprise) 2. "If You Could See Her" 3. "What Would You Do?" 4. "Cabaret" 5. Finale	1. Herr Schultz 2. Emcee 3. Fraulein Schneider 4. Sally 5. Cliff, Sally, Fraulein Schneider, Herr Schultz, Emcee, and the Company

In order to transition *Cabaret* to the big screen, the score went through a number of alterations. In addition to the omission of Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz's romantic subplot, Brian Roberts is not a singing character, thus resulting in the cutting of the following numbers: "So What?," "Perfectly Marvelous," "It Couldn't Please Me More," "Why Should I Wake Up?," "Married" and its reprise, "Meeskite," and "What Would You Do?" Additionally, "The Telephone Song" and the first performance of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" do not appear in Fosse's 1972 adaptation, and there is a minor change of lyrics at the end of "If You Could See Her." Beyond the nonappearance of Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz, Sally's musical role in *Cabaret* represents the greatest changes to the score in the film: she does not perform "Don't Tell Mama," but instead sings a newly written song entitled "Mein Herr;" upon the beginning of her relationship with Brian, she performs "Maybe This Time," which Kander and Ebb had written for a previous, unproduced musical; and "Money, Money," a duet between Sally

and the Emcee, replaces “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty.”<sup>32</sup> These widespread changes result in all but one musical number – “Tomorrow Belongs to Me” – being performed within the Kit Kat Klub, further strengthening the divide between *Cabaret*’s narrative and music in the filmed version. In this way, Fosse’s film adaptation was a more truly concept/modernist interpretation of the musical than the original Broadway production. These alterations greatly informed the later iterations of *Cabaret*, as a number of the changes made for the screen ultimately made their way to the stage as well.

While the 1987 and 1998 revival editions of *Cabaret*’s book stay true to the original structure of the 1966 production, several song modifications are still present between the two versions of the show. The 1987 Broadway production largely resembles that of 1966 – Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz retain their musical numbers, except for “Meeskite,” Sally’s role remains the same, musically, and Cliff’s songs are not cut as they were in the film. Nonetheless, three major changes present themselves in this production. For Cliff, Kander and Ebb wrote “Don’t Go” as a replacement for “Why Should I Wake Up?” Similarly, the Emcee sings a medley of “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty” and “Money, Money” with his Cabaret Girls, and he also performs a new song that was cut from the original production, entitled “I Don’t Care Much.” The Emcee’s performance of “If You Could See Her” also adopts the altered lyrics from the film adaptation.

Like the 1987 version, 1998’s *Cabaret* does not include “Meeskite,” “The Telephone Song,” or “Why Should I Wake Up?” Beyond these similarities, however, the 1998 revival edition embraces more of the alterations from the 1972 film than its 1987

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<sup>32</sup> June Skinner Sawyers, *Cabaret FAQ: All That’s Left to Know About the Broadway and Cinema Classic*, (Milwaukee, WI: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books), 2017, 187-188.

on-stage predecessor. Most notably, the role of Sally is of greater importance, as demonstrated through her performances of “Mein Herr” and “Maybe This Time,” both in addition to “Don’t Tell Mama.” Additionally, Cliff is a predominantly speaking role, as he no longer performs “Don’t Go” and only sings a portion of “Perfectly Marvelous.” This production also includes the Emcee’s “I Don’t Care Much,” and replaces “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty” entirely with “Money, Money,” though unlike in the film, this number is performed with the ensemble of Cabaret Girls rather than Sally. The altered lyrics to “If You Could See Her,” which first appeared in the 1972 film and again in the revised 1987 book for the stage, are also present in the 1998 edition. Today, this updated version of *Cabaret* is the most traditionally performed, and was utilized for successive revivals, including the widely praised 2014 Broadway and the currently running 2021 West End productions.

Regarding these myriad changes to *Cabaret* over its history, Margaret Gray writes the following in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2016:

Fifty years, in the scope of theatrical history, is an eye blink – “Cabaret” is a baby next to, say, Greek tragedy – but the pace of progress has sped up since 1966. Harold Prince, who conceived and directed the original production, created a startlingly innovative piece of theater that also, inevitably, was a product of its time. Successive interpretations of “Cabaret” followed suit, with each new iteration both reflecting and disrupting a distinct cultural moment. As a result, the musical’s evolution can be seen as a mirror of American society over the last half-century: what has changed and what hasn’t.<sup>33</sup>

In a vacuum, *Cabaret*’s ever-evolving nature could seem rather inconsequential. When considered within the progression of America’s political and social attitudes over the last half-century, and especially when compared against other entries in the musical theater

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<sup>33</sup> Gray, *Los Angeles Times*.

genre, *Cabaret*'s cycle of modification becomes a powerful commentary. It, "like the best works of art...has changed over the years just as we, the audience, has changed," too, allowing its central themes and messages to remain incredibly potent over its nearly sixty-year history.<sup>34</sup>

A necessary addition to the existing scholarly discourse regarding *Cabaret*'s status as a never-ending adaptation is a detailed study of these musical modifications in context, an interrogation of the altered songs' function within the musical, and a discussion how these changes affect the show's lasting thematic and emotional impact. The remainder of this project will be devoted to further investigation into the added and modified musical numbers in *Cabaret*. Chapter Two will focus on *Cabaret* as a piece of political commentary through a closer examination of the musical changes to the Emcee's role: the seemingly minor line change in "If You Could See Her," as well as the addition of the numbers "Money, Money" and "I Don't Care Much." Chapter Three will utilize the progression of Sally Bowles's character, from unimportant romantic interest to fascinating leading lady, and her added musical numbers, "Mein Herr" and "Maybe This Time," to further explore *Cabaret*'s thematic material. For the purposes of this project, the contextual functions of the musical and thematic alterations will primarily be discussed in the framework of the 1998 revival script.

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<sup>34</sup> Sawyers, xiii.

## CHAPTER 2. *CABARET* AS COMMENTARY: FINDING DEEPER MEANING WITH THE EMCEE

The first act of *Cabaret*'s stage version concludes with a perfectly situated display of political friction, a shocking moment that has the power to completely knock the wind out of the audience as it sends them, disheartened and concerned, into intermission. During Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz's engagement celebration, Ernst Ludwig, a friend and student of Cliff, arrives and removes his jacket, revealing his swastika armband for the first time in the musical. Shortly thereafter, a chorus of characters led by Fraulein Kost, a prostitute staying in Schneider's boarding house, join in a rousing performance of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," a melodious pro-Nazi anthem written specifically for *Cabaret* and first performed by the Emcee and waiters earlier in act one. Until this moment, Ernst was a kind and welcoming character, making this divulgence of his true allegiances at a party celebrating the engagement of an elderly Jewish man all the more horrifying. Regarding this pivotal moment in *Cabaret*, John Bush Jones writes that, given the strategic placement of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" at the end of act one, "spectators leave for intermission humming the infectiously haunting tune until they stop dead...with the horrific realization, 'My God, I'm humming a Nazi anthem.' By directly working on the audience, *Cabaret* showed how easy it is to succumb to propaganda."<sup>35</sup> In the 1972 film adaptation, this moment appears in a different context but manages a similar effect. In an idyllic rural Biergarten, a young man sings "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" to the onlooking patrons; the camera eventually pans out to reveal the boy's Nazi

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<sup>35</sup> Jones, 243.

armband to the movie-watching audience, and a majority of on-screen personalities join him in singing the anthem. Brian looks on, both horrified and fascinated, but he, Sally, and Maximilian von Heune continue about their day in the Germany countryside. Both on stage and in the film, this jarring moment brings sudden clarity to the stakes of *Cabaret*'s narrative. Moreover, "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" forces the audience into the realization that, up until this moment, a vast majority of the show's musical numbers have served to distract from the horrifying actuality of the world outside the walls of the Kit Kat Klub. This sudden dawning of reality demonstrates the manner in which *Cabaret* implements "devices that implicate the audience in [the show's] milieu," resulting in one of the most impactful moments in modern musical theater.<sup>36</sup>

While "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" is one of the most overtly political moments in *Cabaret*, the rest of the musical does not shy away from its commentarial nature. Originally written as a "modern-day morality play for a difficult era" during the height of the American Civil Rights Movement, *Cabaret* was always intended to exist as a piece of political commentary.<sup>37</sup> Just as America's social and political landscape has shifted in fifty-six years since *Cabaret*'s first iteration on Broadway, so too has the central messaging of the show. Musical alterations within *Cabaret* have worked to not only reinforce the original political themes, but also to deepen and explore additional issues that the original book and score left relatively untouched. Specifically, a closer look at the musical numbers "If You Could See Her," "Money, Money," and "I Don't Care Much" provide new insights into the political innerworkings of *Cabaret*, ranging from the

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<sup>36</sup> Clark, 57.

<sup>37</sup> Sawyers, xiii.

show's treatment on German antisemitism to broader dissections of wealth and capitalism, as well as general feelings of despair and nihilism towards the ways of the world. Furthermore, these three numbers, all performed by the Emcee, are some of the most traditionally modernist in their function, as they are separate from the plot and instead offer elucidation on the narrative events. Although these moments operate less blatantly than "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," these modifications remind the audience of the anxious political juncture depicted in *Cabaret's* story, as well as the economic and social questions of modern society beyond the walls of the theater.

### **"If You Could See Her:" How One Line Packs a Punch**

Following the dramatic conclusion of *Cabaret's* first act, act two adopts a different tone. Similar to Cliff's, or Brian's, inability to ignore the growing presence and threat of the Nazis in *Cabaret's* narrative arc, the audience, too, has become unshakably aware of Berlin's social and political climate. The darkness that festers outside the Kit Kat Klub begins to permeate the plot as a whole, and it becomes clear that the show is not bound for the joyfully uplifting ending that tends to define the American musical. As such, act two opens with Fraulein Schneider grappling with her decision to marry Herr Schultz in light of what transpired at their engagement party. Unable to disregard the Nazis, she begins to understand that her engagement to a Jewish man is a dangerous decision in Germany's social and political climate of the time. Herr Schultz, in an attempt to assure her that everything will be just fine, sings his reprise of "Married," but is interrupted when a brick comes crashing through the window.<sup>38</sup> This scene concludes

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<sup>38</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1967), 90.



with further attempts from Schultz to comfort Schneider, who remains unconvinced that they can remain together.

As the lights fade and the scene changes, the Emcee enters to perform “If You Could See Her.” Entering with the Emcee is a chorus girl in a gorilla suit, dressed in a cute dress and carrying a handbag.<sup>39</sup> The Emcee sings of his profound love for the gorilla, and of the societal disapproval of their coupling:

I know what you’re thinking –  
You wonder why I chose her  
Out of all the ladies in the world.  
That’s just a first impression—  
What good’s a first impression?  
If you knew her like I do,  
It would change your point of view.

If you could see her through my eyes,  
You wouldn’t wonder at all.  
If you could see her through my eyes,  
I guarantee you would fall like I did.

When we’re in public together,  
I hear society groan.  
But if they could see her through my eyes,  
Maybe they’d leave us alone.<sup>40</sup>

An undeniably comedic song, “If You Could See Her” finds its effectiveness in its absurdity. The ludicrous idea of the Emcee’s romantic love for a gorilla simultaneously distracts from and comments on the emotionally heavy preceding scene between Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz. In the original score, the song concludes with the following:

I understand your objection,  
I grant you the problem’s not small.  
But if you could see her through my eyes,

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<sup>39</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1967), 92.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

She isn't a meeskite at all.<sup>41</sup>

“Meeskite,” a Yiddish term for an ugly person, heralds back to Herr Schultz’s song of the same name in the original production, and directly connects the Emcee’s performance to the issue of Schultz’s Jewish heritage. Yet, this allusion at the end of “If You Could See Her” allows the song to exist almost entirely as a comedic number. A closer reading of the song indicates that the utilization of “meeskite,” while subtly remarking on the role of antisemitism in *Cabaret*, ultimately acts as more of a joke towards the gorilla’s appearance, placing the general focus on the ridiculous nature of the romantic relationship depicted in the musical number. “If You Could See Her,” as a result, maintains an exceedingly similar tone to the musical numbers in act one: entertaining and humorous, while offering a brief aside regarding the plot as a whole.

Beginning with the 1972 film adaptation and continuing with the following revisions to the stage play, Schultz’s performance “Meeskite” is cut and a subsequent change to the closing line of “If You Could See Her” results in a much more demoralizing conclusion to the Emcee’s comical song. In these later adaptations, the construction of “If You Could See Her” remains entirely the same up until this altered line: “But if you could see her through my eyes, / She wouldn’t look Jewish at all!”<sup>42</sup> This single change to the lyrics brings new vitriol into the otherwise light-hearted piece, now offering an overt comment on the political realities of act two. The song’s overall effect shifts entirely as a result. Similar to the shock of “Tomorrow Belongs to Me,” the Emcee’s reading of “She wouldn’t look Jewish at all” once again pulls the rug out from

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<sup>41</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1967), 93.

<sup>42</sup> Joe Masteroff and Fred Ebb, *Cabaret* (Revised 1987), (New York: Concord Theatricals), 1987, 66.

under *Cabaret*'s spectators and casts a foreboding sense of gloom over their projections of what is to come in the narrative arc of the musical. While some might argue that this new closing line detracts from the subtlety in the original rendition of the song, the Emcee's blatancy culminates in a more potent, more biting dramatic beat. It is, in the end, a perfect encapsulation of the means by which *Cabaret* "keeps sharpening its edges for modern times."<sup>43</sup>

The lyrical adjustment at the end of "If You Could See Her" is particularly effective when considered in the larger context of *Cabaret*'s story development, both on stage and on screen. In both versions, "If You Could See Her" comes shortly after the revelation that a major character is Jewish. In the stage production, this revelation is Ernst Ludwig's, as he learns of Herr Schultz's religious identity at the engagement party. In a quiet rage upon learning this information, Ernst confronts Fraulein Schneider in the following exchange:

ERNST: Fraulein Schneider – I must speak to you. You and I are old acquaintances. I have sent you many new lodgers. So let me urge you – think what you are doing. This marriage is not advisable. I cannot put it too strongly. For your own welfare...

FRAULEIN SCHNEIDER: What about Herr Schultz's welfare?

ERNST: He is not a German.

FRAULEIN SCHNEIDER: He was born here.

ERNST: He is not a German. Good night.<sup>44</sup>

Having met Herr Schultz only a few lines earlier, Ernst suddenly shifts from friendly party guest, excited for and supportive of the happy couple, to an antisemitic brute who

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<sup>43</sup> Gray, *Los Angeles Times*.

<sup>44</sup> Joe Masteroff and Fred Ebb, *Cabaret* (1998 Version), (New York: Concord Theatricals), 1998, 74.

denounces the idea of this union. In the film, “If You Could See Her” immediately follows Fritz Wendel’s confession to Brian – and subsequently, to the audience – that he is secretly Jewish. Brian is understanding, albeit naïve in his understanding of the weight of such a confession. The Emcee’s final line in “If You Could See Her” ultimately engages in conversation with both of these moments. Prior to the disclosure of Herr Schultz and Fritz’s beliefs, Ernst and Brian, respectively, viewed these characters as typical German men. Just as is the case for the audience when the Emcee reveals his gorilla lover’s Jewish heritage, everything changes for the characters when learning this information. The line, “She wouldn’t look Jewish at all,” thus becomes a means of illuminating both the unbelievable nature of Nazi attitudes towards Jewish individuals as well as the sudden severity of the musical’s narrative. It is a moment that packs a serious punch for the audience as it harkens back to these reveals: one single line acts as a reminder that any character in the show could be Jewish and could be in grave danger because of their identity, and we as spectators would be none the wiser. After the idea of the Nazis and their hatred materializes at the end of act one, this seemingly small change to the beginning of *Cabaret*’s second act demonstrates how this idea, this fear, this unshakable sense of doom, has completely permeated the show. At first glance, this alteration is a minor one. However, it is one that successfully amplifies the stakes of the musical’s dramatic trajectory, and parallels the additional, more sweeping, changes to the Emcee’s musical contributions to *Cabaret*.

### **The Capitalistic Cynicism of “Money, Money”**

In each iteration of *Cabaret*, the Emcee performs a number regarding the societal and personal significance of one’s wealth: the original Broadway production includes a

performance of “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty,” while subsequent adaptations feature “Money, Money.” Upon first glance, these selections appear to be equal in function and execution. This is particularly true in the stage production, as it directly follows Cliff’s decision to earn money by traveling to Paris to transport a briefcase back to Berlin for Ernst, in order to contribute “to a very good cause.”<sup>45</sup> Although the audience has yet to learn of the true nature of this errand, and that this “cause” ultimately contributes to Ernst’s Nazi affiliation, the Emcee’s performance of these numbers emphasizes the importance of monetary success in today’s world, and calls into question the methods by which people attain such levels of affluence. Despite their undeniable similarities, “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty” and “Money, Money” approach this topic rather differently, each bringing distinct tones to this idea of money’s role in society. Consider the following lines from “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty,” as performed in *Cabaret*’s original production:

I know my little cousin Eric  
Has his creditors hysterical,  
And also Cousin Herman  
Had to pawn his mother’s ermine,  
And my sister and my brother  
Took to hocking one another, too.

But I’ve got some talents  
Which build up my balance,  
So even my bankers agreed  
That me, I’m sitting pretty –  
I’ve got all the money I need.<sup>46</sup>

An individualistic look at the importance of money, the Emcee finds an equilibrium between his indifference towards his family members’ financial struggles and the

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<sup>45</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1967), 62.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 64.

celebration of his own prosperity. While he presents a feigned sense of pity for those less fortunate, he also highlights his own abilities and talents which have led to his financially comfortable existence. He emphasizes that his contributions to society are responsible for his wealth and his ability to sit “pretty.” “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty,” as a result, demonstrates an embrace of the tenants of capitalism – the narrator’s motive to work and to earn a living not only leads to a more comfortable and fun lifestyle, but it is something to be celebrated. Conversely, he looks down on the economic struggles of his family members, for they do not possess the work ethic or opportunities necessary to have a healthy bank account. Of course, given the Emcee’s function within *Cabaret* as an often-sarcastic onlooker and commentator on the action, we as the audience understand that what he sings cannot be taken entirely at face-value. Nonetheless, depending on one’s own interpretation, “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty” either presents a supportive depiction of earning money through hard work, or more likely, a relatively subtextual, thickly veiled critique of capitalistic structures.

By contrast, “Money, Money,” first incorporated into the 1972 film adaptation of *Cabaret*, offers more overt commentary on the concept of wealth. Abandoning the first-person approach for a more general and detached perspective, “Money, Money” includes the following stanzas in the middle of the song:

If you happen to be rich,  
And alone,  
And you need a companion  
You can ring ting-a-ling  
For the maid.

If you happen to be rich  
And you find  
You are left by your lover,  
Though you moan

And you groan quite a lot

You can take it on the chin,  
Call a cab,  
And begin to recover  
On your  
Fourteen-carat yacht.<sup>47</sup>

Rather than presenting a character whose talents and skills are responsible for their comfortable monetary status, the Emcee simply sings of the power that rich individuals hold. Removing the first-person perspective in this number allows for the scope of this financial and societal power to come to life in a new way, this time as a standard of life that is unattainable to a majority of *Cabaret*'s characters and, conceivably, to a number of audience members. The sheer opulence on display in this number strengthens this reading. In "The Money Song/Sitting Pretty," the wealth that the Emcee inhabits allows for a comfortable, though not necessarily lavish, lifestyle, whereas that same wealth in "Money, Money" describes a yacht made of gold and the manner in which money can replace love. In this aptly titled musical number, word "money" is sung over one hundred times between the Emcee and the chorus of cabaret girls, and is presented as a powerful asset that can fix any levels of sadness or loneliness. Additionally, this song invented the phrase, "Money makes the world go 'round," a now iconic line that speaks to the innerworkings and values of modern civilizations, in which people equate financial success with happiness and fulfilment.<sup>48</sup> A rich individual not only holds the key to unbridled happiness, but they also occupy a place of relative supremacy in capitalistic societies. Like the lyric change at the conclusion of "If You Could See Her," the

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<sup>47</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 61.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 60.

implementation of “Money, Money” paves the way for *Cabaret* to present a scornful and unabashed interpretation of financial politics in the modern world. This reading of the Emcee’s added number also works to deepen *Cabaret*’s existing commentary on civil rights: the social and political hardships that people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals experience directly related to societal class struggles as well. Although “Money, Money” takes on a similarly humorous and entertaining portrayal of money to “The Money Song/Sitting Pretty,” the number presents a significantly more scathing take on the economic structures of society, which allow the wealthiest individuals to lead extravagant and luxurious lives, often at the expense of those less fortunate than they. As such, this song strikes a delicate balance between an over-the-top sense of flippancy and a heavier feeling of pessimism towards the realities of the world. The latter of these effects will only grow as *Cabaret*’s later adaptations approach their endings.

### **“I Don’t Care Much:” The Musical’s Embrace of Pessimism**

Beyond its heavy and political subject matter throughout the show, *Cabaret* further distinguishes itself from the traditional musical theater canon through its largely unhappy, unsatisfying ending. As the threat of the Nazis grows, the romantic couplings dissolve and the on-stage representation of Berlin grows darker. Act two progresses in a manner that foreshadows the completely crushing end to the show, infusing musical and narrative moments with increasingly powerful feelings of dejection and nihilism. Given his positioning within *Cabaret*’s framework, the Emcee occupies one of these breaking points through his performance of “I Don’t Care Much.” Written for and then cut from the original Broadway production, “I Don’t Care Much” first appeared in the 1987 revival and was reworked and lengthened for the 1998 production. In both the 1987 and



1998 version of *Cabaret*, “I Don’t Care Much” immediately follows a fight between Cliff and Sally: Cliff, whose eyes have finally opened to the festering horrors in Weimar-era Berlin, insists that the two leave for America as soon as possible, while Sally insists on avoiding the truth of their situation, unable “to fathom what the Nazi takeover of Germany has to do with her.”<sup>49</sup> The emotionally turbulent scene culminates with the entrance of the despondent Emcee, who sings the following, as written for the 1998 revised version:

I don’t care much, go or stay  
I don’t care very much either way.

Hearts grow hard on a windy street.  
Lips grow cold with the rent to meet.

So if you kiss me,  
If we touch,  
Warning’s fair,  
I don’t care very much.

I don’t care much, go or stay.  
I don’t care very much either way.

Words sound false when your coat’s too thin.  
Feet don’t waltz when the roof caves in.

So if you kiss me,  
If we touch,  
Warning’s fair,  
I don’t care very much.<sup>50</sup>

“I Don’t Care Much,” while a rather simple number, presents a deeply pessimistic, albeit subtle, interpretation which points towards political nihilism. In this reading, the song mirrors the subject of Cliff and Sally’s argument in moments leading up

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<sup>49</sup> Jones, 244.

<sup>50</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 87.

to the Emcee's performance. While Cliff finally realizes the dangerous reality of remaining in Berlin and that he is powerless to do anything to stop the spread of evil around them, Sally makes the conscious decision to remain unaware, to avoid and ignore the malevolent powers that are mounting just outside her door. For both of them, and for entirely different reasons, nothing about their situation matters anymore. Sally could not be paid to care at all, and Cliff, in his attempts to try and get her to open her eyes, understands that caring will only make things worse. This complete dejection, a renunciation of any joy presented throughout the musical thus far, appears in the Emcee's performance of this musical number. Typically upbeat, sarcastic, and silly, the Emcee who sings "I Don't Care Much" feels completely withdrawn of any emotion beyond utter despair and has become a haunting shadow of the performer who has entertained his audience throughout the show thus far. As a result, this song becomes one of the most effective – and affective – moments in the show, as the Emcee becomes a personification of *Cabaret's* steadily increasing levels of hopelessness and pessimism.

Beyond its enhancement of the Emcee's function within *Cabaret*, "I Don't Care Much" also speaks to the dying romance between Cliff and Sally. Following the couple's fight in the preceding scene, Sally goes to the Kit Kat Klub to perform her final solo and the title number of the show, "Cabaret." In the song, she vows to maintain her morally debauched lifestyle at the Kit Kat Klub because, after all, life is no more than a cabaret.<sup>51</sup> When considering the moments that bookend "I Don't Care Much," it becomes clear that the number acts as both a reflection on Sally and Cliff's fight, as well as a harbinger of the fate of their affair. By this point, and with the help of this added song, the audience

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<sup>51</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 90-91.

recognizes that despite Sally's pregnancy with Cliff's child and their earlier commitment to the relationship, the two have either fallen out of love with each other or rather, were never truly in love at all and planned to stay together solely as a result of the unexpected pregnancy. As the Emcee's lyrics suggest, Cliff and Sally have grown apathetic in their romantic involvement, and perhaps they begin to understand that there is no future for them to pursue together. In a genre that so often hinges on the successful coupling of a man and a woman, "I Don't Care Much" brings an unprecedented level of romantic pessimism to the fore, forcing the audience to question the aspects they value most in a musical theater experience. The official uncoupling of the protagonist and unconventional leading lady does not arrive until later in act two, but "I Don't Care Much" is an effective tool to bring new levels of gloom to their romantic endeavors, prognosticating the bitter end to which they will come by the end of the musical.

Ultimately, the incorporation of these modifications to the role of the Emcee over *Cabaret's* history allows for the show present its thematic material in a sharper manner, resulting in the amplified potency of its political commentary in particular. The Emcee's consistent separation from the central narrative events, as well as the role's gradual increase in stage time and importance, reinforce the biting critical moments depicted throughout *Cabaret*. However, this change in the Emcee's role also affects the overall presence of Cliff or Brian in the musical; as the Emcee accrued more stage time and more musical numbers, Cliff and Brian's characters had fewer songs to sing, allowing them to act more passively within the world of *Cabaret* as they became eyes through which the audience experiences the musical. These alterations, in the end, paved the way for Sally to become a larger, more crucial role as well, and the more active character in the central

romance. The next chapter will take a closer look at the progression of Sally's character, and will demonstrate that her added musical numbers, like those of the Emcee, also contributed to *Cabaret*'s search for deeper meaning.

## CHAPTER 3. SALLY BOWLES: REINVENTING ROMANCE AND THE LEADING LADY

Since the original inception of *Cabaret*, the character of Sally Bowles has not only become one of the most memorable from the show, but also one of the most uniquely fascinating examples of a leading lady in all of musical theater. Sally's iconic status is somewhat surprising – her role in the original production of *Cabaret* was not intended to be of pivotal significance, and unlike Broadway's traditional lead female roles of the time, Sally is deeply flawed, misguided, and arguably difficult for audiences to root for. On the other hand, however, Sally is positioned so distinctively within the narrative structures of *Cabaret* that it was only a matter of time before she became the central figure that she is today. Not only a performer at the Kit Kat Klub, Sally is also the main romantic interest for Cliff Bradshaw, the show's protagonist and most direct link to the audience, placing her at the intersection between the onstage and offstage worlds depicted in *Cabaret*. Subsequently, Sally is the lens through which Cliff (and Brian, in the film version) and the real-life audience experience *Cabaret*'s presentation of Weimar-era Berlin as “violent and erotic, thrilling and corrupting, but most of all as a sexual/political Other that must eventually be disavowed.”<sup>52</sup> Given her original placement as a character of secondary importance in the 1966 Broadway production, Sally's evolution over time is a fascinating angle through which to analyze the progression of *Cabaret*.

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<sup>52</sup> Mizejewski, 209.

Over the course of *Cabaret*'s extensive adaptive history, two major additions have been made to Sally's character: the songs "Mein Herr" and "Maybe This Time," both of which have become two of the musical's most distinctive numbers. Originally added in the 1972 film, these musical selections were eventually incorporated into the 1998 edition of the book and score and have become undeniable standards in modern productions of *Cabaret*. Careful analysis of both of these showstopping numbers allows for stronger illumination of *Cabaret*'s rather progressive, and arguably daring, presentation of sexuality and womanhood. Furthermore, these songs offer scholars and audiences alike an avenue through which to understand more fully Sally's interiority and complexity as a character and ultimately, her rise to a singular position in the annals of Broadway leading ladies.

### **"Mein Herr:" Sally as the Unapologetically Sexual Woman**

Similar to the comparison between "The Money Song/Sitting Pretty" and "Money, Money," Sally's two introductory musical numbers – "Don't Tell Mama" and "Mein Herr" – seem to serve similar purposes. In both selections, Sally regales the audience with her exploits as a cabaret dancer, immediately establishing herself as a character defined by her sexual liberation, an attribute that is a direct reflection of the cultural atmosphere of both the Kit Kat Klub and late 1920s Berlin as a whole. However, the tone with which Sally approaches this topic, with which she first addresses the audience, takes on two entirely different voices. In "Don't Tell Mama," she opens the song with the following:

Mama thinks I'm living in a convent,  
A secluded little convent  
In the southern part of France.

Mama doesn't even have an inkling that  
I'm working in a nightclub  
In a pair of lacy pants.

So please, sir,  
If you run into my mama,  
Don't reveal my indiscretion,  
Give a working girl a chance.<sup>53</sup>

Whereas in "Mein Herr," Sally's opening lines are

You have to understand the way I am, mein Herr.  
A tiger is a tiger, not a lamb, mein Herr.  
You'll never turn the vinegar to jam, mein Herr.  
So I do what I do.  
When I'm through, then I'm through.  
And I'm through – toodle-oo!

Bye bye, mein lieber Herr,  
Farewell, mein lieber Herr.  
It was a fine affair, but now it's over.  
And though I used to care,  
I need the open air.  
You're better off without me, mein Herr.<sup>54</sup>

From the onset of these songs, Sally demonstrates entirely distinct feelings regarding her chosen profession and sexual escapades. Much like its beginning, the remainder of "Don't Tell Mama," Sally's first number since the original 1966 Broadway production of *Cabaret*, continues with pleas to keep her lifestyle a secret from her mother. Although this presentation of shame is certainly a façade, at least at the surface level, the Sally of "Don't Tell Mama" retains some level of innocence and youth as she describes the promises that she made and broke to her mother. In spite of this feigned sense of guilt, the song takes on a playfully flirtatious tone, depicting Sally as a boisterous young woman without a care in the world. She is harmless, a club singer simply in the market

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<sup>53</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 28.

for a good time. “Don’t Tell Mama” establishes that Sally is knowingly naughty in her embrace of life’s guilty pleasures, immediately positioning her as a transgressive entry in the pantheon of Broadway’s leading ladies. The inclusion of “Mein Herr” works to further this depiction of Sally, introducing the audience to shades of her character left unexplored in “Don’t Tell Mama.”

In *Cabaret*’s 1972 film adaptation and the 1998 version of the stage musical, the audience receives a markedly different Sally as a result of “Mein Herr.” While Fosse’s film does not include a performance of “Don’t Tell Mama,” the innocuousness and disingenuous guilt Sally demonstrates through this number in the stage musical seem to disappear entirely once she enters to sing “Mein Herr.” In place of her playful girlishness, Sally brings a persona that is unabashed and actively unapologetic about her sexual life. She is no longer the sweet, albeit cunning lamb who sang “Don’t Tell Mama,” but instead, she’s a tiger on the prowl, proud to present herself as an openly sexual individual, moving from one affair to the next in a cycle of decadent pleasure-seeking. Any semblance of innocence disappears entirely, and instead, the audience is able to see Sally as a confident, independent young woman with a voracious sexual appetite. The song firmly positions Sally within the culture of the overindulgent, sexy Berlin of the early twentieth century, and parallels the sexual liberation that we see on display within the Kit Kat Klub. “Mein Herr,” as a result, mirrors not only Sally’s own sexual promiscuity, but also speaks to the gender-bending Emcee and chorus, as well as Cliff and Brian’s sexual journey within *Cabaret*. Moreover, it exemplifies precisely how Sally further separates herself from other, more traditional leading ladies within musicals: not only is she sexually uninhibited, but she is proud of it. Compared to the moral, virginal



ladies of a vast number of musicals, Sally represents a major shift in the musical genre's depiction of womanhood. Not only does she have physical needs and desires, but she seems to exhibit no interest in finding a life partner. Instead, she sings of her desires to continue living the life she has made for herself, doing what she can "inch by inch / Step by step, mile by mile / Man by man."<sup>55</sup> Of course, Sally's character is not wholly defined by this musical number; confining her attributes to this single moment would not only be inaccurate, but also negligent to her immense complexity. Nonetheless, "Mein Herr" deepens the audience's understanding of Sally's character as it illuminates her heightened level of sexual agency and, more subtly, reframes her whimsical, free-spirited, and coquettish nature as inauspiciously intriguing. Still playful and entrancing, Sally's performance of this number reveals that she has a dark side, that she has the power to devour the world "man by man" without a second thought.

Beyond its function of contextualizing Sally within Weimar-era Berlin and introducing her sexually unrestrained lifestyle, the presentation of Sally's carnal desires and practices within "Mein Herr" offers the audience with a subtle foreshadowing to the events to come in *Cabaret's* narrative. By the end of the musical, Sally and Cliff – or Brian – have ended their relationship and the latter chooses to leave Berlin, while Sally stays behind and continues to perform at the Kit Kat Klub. Their uncoupling comes after Sally's decision to terminate her pregnancy. Regarding this moment in the stage production, John Bush Jones writes that Sally "has no sense of responsibility or connection to anything that doesn't nurture her narcissistic hedonism; without consulting

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<sup>55</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 28.

Cliff, she trades her fur coat for the abortion of their child.”<sup>56</sup> Notably, Cliff/Brian is left unaware of this abortion until after it has already occurred, as it was a decision that Sally made entirely on her own. When Brian confronts her about this choice in the film, Sally brushes it off and simply calls the decision one of her “whims.”<sup>57</sup> This crushing and pivotal moment near the end of the musical, while shocking, does not come out of nowhere. Specifically, these shades of Sally are well established in “Mein Herr.” The early introduction to Sally’s character through this musical number establishes her sexuality as a spin on the *femme fatale* trope, in which a male figure meets his downfall as a result of becoming involved with a sexually alluring woman.<sup>58</sup> Her line, “And though I used to care, I need the open air / You’re better off without me, mein Herr,” seems to come to life in the later moments of the show.<sup>59</sup> It is through this early performance, both in the film and on stage, that *Cabaret* invites the audience into this partly *fatale* reading of Sally’s character. Her affair with the show’s protagonist was fine for each of them, as well as for the audience, but this number offers an early signal that they were never meant to end up together in the end. However, “Mein Herr” is certainly not the only indication of this romantic endeavor’s inevitable failure – later in act one, Sally performs another number which ponders the fate of this relationship. Through it, she presents a naïve hopefulness that contradicts her façades “Don’t Tell Mama” and especially “Mein Herr,” a hopefulness that will eventually come crumbling down in the musical’s conclusion.

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<sup>56</sup> Jones, 244.

<sup>57</sup> *Cabaret*, Fosse.

<sup>58</sup> Mizejewski, 231.

<sup>59</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 28.

## The Metaphor of “Maybe This Time”

In the film adaptation of *Cabaret*, Kander and Ebb incorporate a new song for Sally, sung when she and Brian first make love. Eventually, in the 1998 version of the stage book and score, this new song emerges well after Sally and Cliff have become a couple, coming after the moment in which she informs Cliff that she is pregnant with his child. This musical number, “Maybe This Time,” has become one of the most famous individual songs from *Cabaret*, and in both the film and in modern stage productions, it is Sally’s most subdued and personal solo piece. Coming at pivotal moments in her romantic couplings with Cliff or Brian, “Maybe This Time” operates as Sally’s rumination on the failures of her past affairs, and an expression of her hope in her newfound relationship. She sings:

Maybe this time, I’ll be lucky.  
Maybe this time, he’ll stay.  
Maybe this time, for the first time,  
Love won’t hurry away.

He will hold me fast.  
I’ll be home at last.  
Not a loser anymore,  
Like the last time  
And the time before.<sup>60</sup>

Revealing much more of Sally’s genuine interiority than her introductory tunes, the opening stanzas of “Maybe This Time” exhibit that she is a woman scorned, left wanting and hurting after each romantic relationship, and desperately hoping for someone to hold and love her. This piece makes it immediately clear that her persona in the Kit Kat Klub, and the one she presents in her everyday conversations with Cliff, Brian, and the

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<sup>60</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 57-58.

supporting characters in Fraulein Schneider's boarding house, is an illusion. Randy Clark writes that the lyrics of "Maybe This Time" are "tentative yet hopeful about love" and act as "a counterpoint to the pragmatic lyrics of 'Mein Lieber Herr,'" as they work to provide the audience with deeper information about Sally's character and romantic desires.<sup>61</sup> Yet, her veneer remains somewhat intact, as Sally performs this number not to Cliff or to Brian, but to the audiences, both in real life and in the Kit Kat Klub. Separating herself from her conversation – or, in the film, her lovemaking – with her new lover, Sally addresses the audience directly in "Maybe This Time," as if to demonstrate that even in her deepest moments of vulnerability, she is in a constant state of performing. Despite the song's revelation of Sally's character, it is not at all rooted in reality. Rather, "Maybe This Time" is a "pure metaphor [for Sally's] hope for permanent romantic attachment," in which her openness about her feelings and desires still crashes against the protective barrier that she cannot let down.<sup>62</sup> In this manner, "Maybe This Time" becomes one of the most quintessentially modernist moments in *Cabaret* – although Sally sings this song in response to a seemingly winning romantic endeavor, the song itself does not contribute to the progression of *Cabaret*'s plot and operates as an extended metaphor for Sally's wishes. It is specific commentary on the nature and history of her love life, performed just outside of the narrative action and testing the boundary between the reality of her story and the fantasy of the Kit Kat Klub. Nonetheless, while Cliff and Brian do not get to see this "real" version of Sally, the audience finally gets a glimpse beneath her armor as she tentatively invites them in to see who she truly is. As a result, the audience feels

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<sup>61</sup> Clark, 55.

<sup>62</sup> Mast, 322.

more connected to Sally and more compelled to root for her as the narrative drama of *Cabaret* progresses. This presentation of a more fully realized and multi-layered Sally pushes us to cheer with her as she exclaims:

All the odds are in my favor.  
Something's bound to begin.  
It's got to happen, happen sometime...  
Maybe this time,  
Maybe this time I'll win!<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, however, Sally's beautiful expression of hope and optimism also serves as a distraction to the audience, not only from the darkness brewing outside the walls of the Kit Kat Klub, but also from the inevitable and crushing failure of her relationship with Cliff/Brian. Despite this moment of internal clarity from Sally and her success in inviting the audience into her true self for just a moment, the presence of "maybe" cannot be ignored. This doubt, both within Sally and within the audience, will only fester, and the exuberant air with which we hoped for her to win this time will quickly dissipate. In the grand context of *Cabaret* as a whole, "Maybe This Time" functions as the moment in which the audience is most closely relating to Sally, making the tragic and unsatisfying end to her relationship all the more devastating. This number is a covert harbinger of what is to come for these characters, and it reinforces Sally's doubts about love. She will remain at the Kit Kat Klub, likely reverting to her "man by man" approach to romance, until she is destroyed by the evil gathering just outside the club. Through this interpretation, Sally's juxtaposition to the conventional female leads within the musical genre becomes even more fascinating. Traditionally, musicals depend on the "happily ever after" trope, in which the successful coupling of a man and a woman

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<sup>63</sup> Masteroff and Ebb (1998), 58.

works to resolve other issues in the larger community.<sup>64</sup> In *Cabaret*, Sally's complexity as a character – an empowered woman who desires to make her own decisions, but who also displays great levels of selfishness and emotional immaturity – undermines the success of her relationship with Cliff or Brian. In the end, this couple does not experience a personality dissolve, a compromise of their characters which allows for the reconciliation of their differences and the triumph of their romantic coupling. As such, their relationship cannot solve the grander issues at play within the larger musical narrative. Despite the hope of a “happily ever after” that Sally presents in “Maybe This Time,” the events that follow serve to make her, and her relationship, a deep subversion of traditional expectations within the musical.

Ultimately, the emotional gut-punches of *Cabaret* find new depths through the inclusion of Sally's hopeful soliloquy in “Maybe This Time.” In a way, the Emcee's act two number, “I Don't Care Much,” both opposes and supports the themes of Sally's emotionally vulnerable song. Upon first reading, the two songs could not be more dissimilar: Sally exudes tender hopefulness bordering on joy and elation, whereas the Emcee – and the characters he represents in the moment – are disconnected and nihilistic, no longer able to care about the world around them. And yet, “I Don't Care Much” is the moment in which Sally's doubts and questions in “Maybe This Time” come to fruition. Her newly found optimism is no more, and all that is left is her old feelings of pessimism towards her romantic prospects.

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<sup>64</sup> Altman, 108.

## **CONCLUSION: *CABARET* AS POSTMODERN THEATER, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In his article, “The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism,” Jonathan Kramer includes an extensive list of postmodern musical and compositional attributes. Some of these include: irony, at least partially; relevance “to cultural, social, and political context;” embrace of contradictions; and advancement of “multiple meanings.”<sup>65</sup> A separate essay by Terry Cook offers an additional approach to postmodernism: “Process rather than product, becoming rather than being, dynamic rather than static, context rather than text, reflecting time and place rather than absolutes.”<sup>66</sup> *Cabaret*’s ever-evolving nature over its nearly sixty-year history indicates that it is a piece of theater that has adopted these central signifiers of postmodernism. A musical constantly in search of deeper meaning, *Cabaret* has continuously found means of deepening its cultural, social, and political commentary through often ironic means, introducing new and altered musical numbers that contain a multitude of meanings and contradictions, and providing specific context through time and place. Upon its original iteration on Broadway in 1966, *Cabaret* was revolutionary and an early entry in the modernist, or concept, musical genre, specifically due to the way in which a majority of the musical numbers function separately from the central plot, providing commentary and deeper insights on the narrative events rather than contributing to the progression of the story. Today, given the musical’s trajectory and willingness to reinvent itself time and time again, *Cabaret* has

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<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Kramer, “The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism,” *Current Musicology* No. 66 (1999), 10-11.

<sup>66</sup> Terry Cook, “Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts,” *Archival Science* No. 1 (2001), 3.

journeyed far beyond an early foray into modernism in American musical theater. In addition to this signifier, it is possibly the first truly postmodern show in the now extensive canon of musical theater. Furthermore, it provides a tangible model for other musicals to potentially follow suit. Today's reconceived productions of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* and Stephen Sondheim's *Company* indicate that this model that *Cabaret* has established has developed into a trend.

The original inception of *Cabaret* further supports the hypothesis that it is a postmodern piece of musical theater. Intended to exist as a commentary on racism in America during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, it worked to blur "the distinction between past and present" as it drew upon an account from the recent past, depicting Weimar-era Berlin and the rise of the Nazi party, as a means to speak to the current cultural and political moment.<sup>67</sup> This specific context of its origins begs the question: is *Cabaret* still relevant today, or have its numerous and sweeping alterations over the years all been for naught. Undoubtedly, the answer is that its relevance remains, and it is arguable that it provides commentary that modern society needs now more than ever before. *Cabaret*'s major changes – the adoption of a sexually liberated female lead, the evolution of the protagonist's sexual identity, and the constant sharpening of its political messaging – seem to have progressed along with our culture over the last fifty-six years. However, the prominence of issues including police brutality and legislation barring women and transgender individuals from receiving healthcare indicate that *Cabaret*'s lessons still ring true today. It is a living piece of theater that will continue to

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<sup>67</sup> Kramer, 15.



inform society, hopefully pushing it to be better. While Broadway trends have potentially caught up with *Cabaret*, society may still have some way to go.

There are abundant opportunities for future research on *Cabaret* and other shows in the musical theater canon. American musical theater, as a genre, is quite young in the grand scheme of music history, and a number of subgenres have emerged in recent years. Dissecting and interrogating other modernist and concept musicals, one of the most popular subgenres of the 1970s and 1980s, as potential entries into the postmodern musical allows for a number of prospects; in many cases, the universal themes at play in these particular shows would allow for deeper discussion and continued applicability over time. *Company*, for instance, is a significant text that is experiencing an arguable postmodern interpretation when taking the current Broadway revival's treatment. With specific regard to *Cabaret*, however, a more comprehensive study into its multiple iterations over its history is a necessary research endeavor; while the characters and musical numbers discussed in this project are significant, there are a number of additional roles and modifications that are ripe for in-depth discussions. Beyond studies of the multiple adaptations and interpretations of *Cabaret* over time, there is an argument to be made that the 1998 revision, commonly performed on stage today, will not be the last version of this monumental show. An analysis of its existing adaptations could be instrumental in helping to formulate what could be the next unique presentation of *Cabaret*, a show whose adaptive history may never end.

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