**IB Film 1: Week 26.1**

**Conventions of the Hollywood Musical**

Watch this great musical number from the original movie Oklahoma (1943) (you should get a full copy to veiw) and compare it to Hugh Jackman's (aka - Wolverine) performance as Curly in a stage production of Oklahoma! (1999).

Oklahoma (1943)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5APc0z49wg>

## Oklahoma! (1999)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8avt6iqAsLc>

# **Musicals**

As you learned in the previous lesson on Busby Berkeley, in the beginning, there were essentially initially two kinds of Hollywood musical - the revue and the backstage musical.

Both of these formats allowed the producers to pack in as much singing and dancing as the time allowed.

If there was a story to be told, it was often a bare thread stringing together the songs in the revue, or something with a bit more narrative describing the action backstage.

But as producers experimented with wider ranging plots they had to come up with ways to integrate the song and dance numbers into the story. So, for example, if they were telling the story of a romance in a small town, they had to invent new conventions to help facilitate a smooth transition from the story to the song (as in the introductory video).

One method was to have the lyrics of a song begin as a continuation of the dialogue. Another was to write songs that expressed the deepest feelings and emotions of the characters and then to try to match the song patterns to whatever action was happening. In this way the song/dance did not so much interrupt the story as enhance it by serving a number of dramatic functions.

The songs could now introduce characters and allow the characters to express their desires. In fact, the same song could be reprised to demonstrate that a character has grown and developed over the course of the movie. A good example of this is when Captain Von Trapp sings 'Edelweiss' twice in The Sound of Music and expresses two very different moods.

There are also exposition songs. For example, these songs might tell an audience what has happened before the time the musical began.

## Musical Hybrids

If we had a dollar for all the times someone said that the “musical was dead,” only to see it emerge more popular than ever, we would be very rich indeed!

Take a look at the history of the American musical since 1959, when Singin' in the Rain was released. As you have no doubt read when you were researching this movie, the 1950’s is often written about as the last great era of the great American film musical.

Really? Someone should tell La La Land that.

Musicals never die - they just change to suit their audience.  And one of the ways they do this – and have always done this – is to become "hybridized" with other genres.

So there have been fantasy musicals (The Wizard of Oz, 1939 and Fantasia, 1940), Western musicals (Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, 1954 and Oklahoma, 1955), street gang musicals (West Side Story 1961), religious musicals (Jesus Christ Superstar, 1973), rock musicals (Rocky Horror Picture Show and Tommy, 1975,  Hair, 1979), animated musicals (The Lion King, 1994), biographical musicals (Evita, 1996), romantic comedy musicals (Moulin Rouge, 2001), more fantasy musicals (Beauty and The Beast  2017), and even a serial killer musical (Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, 2007).

Each with a story and characters that reflected and spoke to what people were thinking and dreaming about at the time.

And yes, let's not forget La La Land, which won the Best Picture Academy Award in 2017.

Staring Emma Stone (who also won the Academy Award for Best Actress) as an aspiring actress and Ryan Gosling as a jazz pianist who meet and fall in love in Los Angeles, the film is a modern rom-com (romantic comedy) musical that once again won the hearts of millions in a genre that is constantly reinventing itself.

# **Further Viewing**

Feel like experiencing more musicals?

Try any (or all) of these.

**Review -**[Gold Diggers](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0024069/) (1933)

**Review -**[The Wizard of Oz](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032138/) (1939)

**Review -**[The Sound of Music](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059742/) (1965)

**Review -**[West Side Story](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0055614/) (1961)