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Shearer, Martha. *New York City and the Hollywood Musical: Dancing in the Streets*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

In *New York City and the Hollywood Musical*, Martha Shearer weaves histories of social and economic change, political disputes, architectural trends, and an altering New York cityscape with analyses of how Hollywood musicals from the start of the sound era to the 1970s responded to, ignored, or promoted views on these issues. These discussions are presented with the overriding aim to critically assess how space and geography played a role in the development of subjects and aesthetics within the genre (6). A discussion of New York and film musicals during the silent film era is beyond the time frame of the book, but it would be fruitful to apply Shearer's framework to these often-overlooked films and their exhibition to add to her otherwise comprehensive study.

By investigating the dialectic between the city and the film musical, Shearer illuminates several trends including "nostalgia musicals" that took advantage of temporal distance to present "ideal *musical cities*" (76, original emphasis). As discussed in Chapter 4, these were particularly popular in the 1940s when romanticised "Gay Nineties" settings, which were richly coded visually and musically, showed the origins of the New York cityscape that was then under threat of urban renewal (76-78, 80). Other nostalgia musicals appeared later on including *New York, New York* (1977) which takes advantage of the less realistic film musical practices of its 1945 in using studio-sets during in contrast with the location shooting that was prevalent by the 1970s (202).

Shearer uses a combination of primary sources and contemporary reporting (primarily *The New York Times* and *Variety*) to situate the creation of fictional New York's within both local and national contexts. This is most effective in her investigation of the changing makeup and perception of Times Square and Broadway in Chapter 5. For example, *42nd Street* (1933) is shown to have been out-of-date at the time of its release and preoccupied with emphasising "Hollywood's symbolic triumph over the struggling Broadway" unrealistic sets designed for the camera as well as the use of repetitive and spectacular chorus line choreography. (116-120). Additionally, Shearer discusses the ideology and perception of New York spaces in the context of the depiction of theatres in what 1946 *Variety* reporter Whitney Williams called "exploitation pictures" (123). In the detailed account of 1947 case where Lee and Jacob Shubert, owners and producers of the Winter Garden Theatre sued Columbia Pictures over the use of their theatre in *The Jolson Story* (1946) and lost, the discussion of contemporary ideas of who, if anyone, has ownership over the idea, perception, and history of a place has wider implications on our understanding of the complications of realistic cinematic depiction and licensing (123-127).

The book incorporates ideas from a wealth of literature on film musicals, the role of cities in cinema, and New York history. However, there are a few sections that would benefit from greater critical engagement with these sources. For example, in Chapter 3 Shearer associates the integrated musical with "neighbourhood musicals" of the 1940s and defines it as distinct from the backstage musicals of the 1930s (46 & 48). The use of such formal categorization is more complex than she explains and requires greater interrogation and justification, especially given the hierarchical artistic connotations associated with the term "integrated musical" in previous academic works and its association with visual and narrative plausibility over sonic and musical continuity. Some of Shearer's neighbourhood musicals integrate numbers by creating new stage areas beyond the theatre, making them less clearly defined in relation to the supposedly non-integrated backstage musicals. For example, one could call *Duffy's Tavern* (1945) a backstage neighbourhood musical where a revue featuring movie stars is put on in order to raise funds for a record factory (56-58). Discussions of subgenre categorisation aside, Shearer provides strong analyses of how numbers are visually

and geographically integrated and the resulting “stabilizing historical contradictions” and promotion of specific ideas of community (46). Her analyses of street dances such as ‘Make Way for Tomorrow’ from *Cover Girl* (1944), which she links to street-mobility, film noir, and Jane Feuer’s notion of ‘non-choreography’, provide an intriguing revelation of how filmmakers integrated song and dance into the non-musical street to claim it as white during a time when there were increased racial tensions in New York (51 & 55). The Chapter 6 discussion *West Side Story* (1961) similarly shows that the selection and use of a setting could amplify a specific perception of a place. The area the Prologue was shot in was slated for destruction in preparation for the Lincoln Centre and Shearer argues that the film’s pessimistic view that its setting is beyond repair and the use of higher musical forms such as Jerome Robbins theatrical street dances were in line with contemporary sentiments (179 & 184). While its set was out-of-date by the time of its release, like that of *42nd Street*, *West Side Story* “parallels [...] the real transformation that was in process in the place where it was set” in contrast to *42nd Street*’s prescriptive retelling or reframing of New York history (182). Shearer also provides the backstory for choreography choices in the Prologue and *West Side Story*’s struggle in balancing realist aesthetics with the depiction of emotion and intent in more abstract artistic forms, a consideration that increasingly pervaded film musicals in the 1960s onwards.

Overall, *New York City and the Hollywood Musical* provides added depth to our understanding of the film musical’s relation to space through a useful introduction to New York’s geographic, social, and entertainment histories, and Shearer makes a strong analytical argument for the role of setting in the development of the film musical form. The book is somewhat tailored to a film studies readership, but it is accessible enough for music and theatre students and researchers to approach without prior film knowledge.