


5-2016

# Transforming the Mundane: Juxtaposing Maria Friedman's "High Society" with George Cukor's "The Philadelphia Story" as an Emphasis on the Importance of Theatre

Dana T. Speight Ms.  
*East Tennessee State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/honors>

 Part of the [American Film Studies Commons](#), [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), [Literature in English, North America Commons](#), [Performance Studies Commons](#), and the [Visual Studies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Speight, Dana T. Ms., "Transforming the Mundane: Juxtaposing Maria Friedman's "High Society" with George Cukor's "The Philadelphia Story" as an Emphasis on the Importance of Theatre" (2016). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 352.  
<https://dc.etsu.edu/honors/352>

This Honors Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact [digilib@etsu.edu](mailto:digilib@etsu.edu).

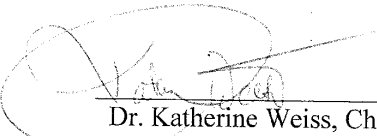
Transforming the Mundane:  
Juxtaposing Maria Friedman's *High Society* with George Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* as an  
Emphasis on the Importance of Theatre

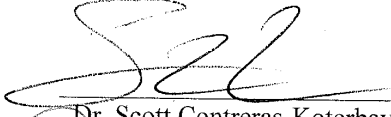
By

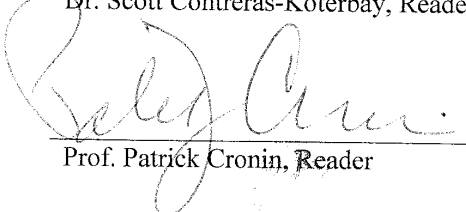
Dana Teresa Speight

An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the  
University Honors Scholars Program  
Honors College  
East Tennessee State University

  
Dana T. Speight  
Date 4/19/16

  
Dr. Katherine Weiss, Chair  
Date 4/19/16

  
Dr. Scott Contreras-Koterbay, Reader  
Date 4/19/16

  
Prof. Patrick Cronin, Reader  
Date 4-19-16

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Acknowledgements	.....1
II.	Introduction	.....3
III.	Chapter One: <i>1920s-1940s American Film and Theatre</i>	.....6
IV.	Chapter Two: <i>Class Antipathy – Old Money, New Money and No Money</i>	.....14
V.	Chapter Three: <i>Exploring the Stylistic Components of Cinema and Theatre</i>	.....33
	a. The Role of Costumes	.....34
	b. The Role of Music and Choreography	.....40
	c. The Role of the Stage, the Theatre and the Audience	.....49
VI.	Conclusion	.....63
VII.	Works Cited	.....66

## **I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all three of the professors that graciously agreed to be on my thesis committee. I am extremely grateful for the mentorship of Dr. Katherine Weiss, whose patience, guidance and continual support made the completion of this thesis possible. I am indebted to her for the innumerable hours she spent reviewing my work; her insightful comments, constructive criticism and sincere enthusiasm for every draft encouraged me to improve my writing and produce a result that exceeded the initial expectations I had set for myself. I have been incredibly fortunate in having a passionate mentor that both challenged and encouraged me throughout the course of my creative research.

Dr. Scott Contreras-Koterbay and Prof. Pat Cronin also deserve my gratitude for their willingness to support me throughout my undergraduate experience at East Tennessee State University. I am not only thankful for the innovative perspectives of both, but also for their compassion and willingness to listen to my ideas. Their candid advice will always remain with me as I move forward in my academic journey.

I would also like to extend my acknowledgements to both the ETSU Honors College and Department of Literature and Language for making my university experience unforgettable. Foremost, I am extremely fortunate and honored to have studied under a fantastic group of professors that have repeatedly encouraged me to succeed and challenge myself. I am also deeply grateful for the scholarships both departments have graciously provided me throughout my four years as an undergraduate; although, I would like to specifically highlight my humble gratitude for the study abroad scholarship that was awarded to me in the summer of 2015. Using that scholarship, I was able to travel with fellow classmates overseas to London, UK and study theatre firsthand as an important source of artistic entertainment. It was during this program that I personally saw Maria Friedman's production of *High Society*, witnessing the unique intimacy

created through Friedman's in-the-round staging and contemporary twist to the narrative that subsequently developed my notion of exploring the differences of theatre and film as my thesis topic. I, along with other spectators, became an active guest in the theatre and was invited to respond to the characters' various hijinks in a manner that was unlike the conduct encouraged during the viewing of a film. Without such opportunity, I would not have been able to fully explore my topic as passionately as I have; thus, I am forever indebted to those who helped make my experience possible.

Most of all, I owe my deepest gratitude to my family. My parents' and brother's reassurance, unconditional love and support throughout my undergraduate experience has made me the ambitious, hardworking woman that I am today. I am extremely grateful for my mother working two jobs to pay for my education at ETSU and my father's faith that has reminded me of my inner strength in times of doubt. I am honored to present this thesis to them as proof of my appreciation for allowing me to further my education despite their financial pressures. Furthermore, I would like to thank my loving boyfriend and his parents for their encouraging words and sleepless nights of reviewing my work.

Last, but *certainly* not least, I owe my greatest thanks to God. Not only I am truly blessed to have received all of the support from the previous individuals and departments, but I am also thankful for good health, determination, and the various opportunities that allowed me to persevere throughout my studies. I simply cannot thank Him enough.

## II. INTRODUCTION

Imagine that it is the wintery eve of December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940 – specifically the date in which countless enthusiastic spectators crowd into select theatres across the city of New York in hopes of catching the premiere of George Cukor’s cinematic production *The Philadelphia Story*. Fervent eyes would become transfixed upon the solitary object presented at the front of each room – a vacant, rectangular screen that metaphorically promised to sufficiently satiate the audience’s escapist desires within the allotted time for screening the film. Occasionally the audience would erupt with joyous laughter, perhaps applauding the overall wit of the director’s tasteful exploitation of the various hijinks and mishaps pertaining to those economically privileged. Such rewarding impacts, however, are diminished as the film concludes – the illusion of reality shatters when the screen becomes void once more while the lingering effects of the film are forgotten. The audiences exit their theatres and return to the monotony of a struggling society while the unseen actors savor their applause and appreciation in the form of written tabloids.

In contrast, envision that it is the bristling eve of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in which London’s Old Vic theatre is premiering Maria Friedman’s *High Society*, the highly anticipated and contemporary theatric adaptation of Cukor’s cinematic precedent. From every angle of the circular interior, onlookers are able to gaze at the suave figure jauntily playing the piano on center stage; his notes, though muffled from the clamor of the audience settling into their respective seats, are of iconic tunes that change fleetingly in response to each recommendation from zealous spectators. The audience is never ostracized as a separate dimension outside of the fabricated diegesis of the production, nor is the interaction between actor and spectator solely confined within the walls of the theatre. The façade remains intact even as the play concludes;

spectators exit and are able to further interact with the actors who, in flesh and covered in a sheen of perspiration as a testimony of their unembellished performance, patiently greet and relish the reactions of impacted fans, esteeming the admiration of those who will endlessly recall the humorous hijinks of Tracy Lord and her dazzling beaux.

Envisioning such scenarios allows for one to momentarily perceive the differing impacts between the two analogous studies of cinema and theatre, the former as a crafted, two-dimensional diegesis of perfected and “manufactured” shots that comprise an artistic whole, while the latter is a three-dimensional amalgamated performance of a raw “contract” formed between each actor and the reciprocating audience (Bentley 107). Though comparable, both subjects belong to an extensive hierarchical debate that has remained prominent within the realm of performing arts since the introduction of cinema in the late nineteenth century. A plethora of scholars choose to argue in favor of the former, suggesting that film surpasses the latter as superior in both aesthetics and overall execution of naturalism; its intrinsic ability to convince the masses of realism is unrivaled while theatre remains “fantastic” (Bentley 107) and subsequently subservient with its contrasting limited possibilities. Furthermore, scholars argue that cinema succeeds in captivating its audiences with controlled aesthetics, specifically how the ability to manipulate the audience’s focus is superior to that of earning one’s attention and accentuating an already existing gap between character and audience with the limited focus of theatre (Kauffmann 153).

Although such notions are considerably persuasive, the argument in favor of cinema is purely subjective and cannot be applied to *all* films and their corresponding plays. As a counterclaim, theatre continues to thrive and flourish as a prominent source of artistic entertainment globally, not only offering a contemporary twist to preexisting texts, but also

effectively impacting an audience in methods that film will never be able to do so – specifically through the sentient, impassioned connection that is fostered and created between performers and spectators that occurs only within live productions. Scholar Peter Mudford elucidates the former concept, emphasizing in *Making Theatre: From Text to Performance* how “an audience makes no difference to the showing of film” due to the finality suggested by a movie as it ends with a dark screen; however, in regards to theatre, live performances exist simultaneously in the present for actors, the stage and the audience (2). Such notions can also be applied to any existing performance, regardless of whether or not the film or play is of academic caliber. Maria Friedman’s *High Society*<sup>1</sup> is a primary example that reaffirms how theatre can triumph the continual debate when compared to its preceding film – *The Philadelphia Story* – directed by George Cukor, both artistically and through its overall execution of the profound, reflective topics represented within the original text as a means of delivering a poignant narrative that will consequently impact its audience.

This thesis will primarily juxtapose George Cukor’s iconic cinematic adaptation of Philip Barry’s *The Philadelphia Story* with Friedman’s revival of the former that was performed in 2015 at London’s Old Vic theatre, offering an innovative rebuttal to the preexisting debate as well as to affirm the argument of how theatre compellingly transforms the mundane. I will first delve into the historical aspects that influenced the creation of Barry’s text – aspects such as the societal emphasis on escapist films and theatric performances to counter the economic recession beginning in the early 1930s, in addition to the increasing social interest in progressive ethics. Subsequently, the second chapter will analyze how each adaptation portrays the underlying theme of the intended narrative, specifically the impact of subjects pertaining to social hierarchy

---

<sup>1</sup> Maria Friedman is the director of the Old Vic’s 2015 production of *High Society* in London, UK. The script used for the play, however, is written by renowned playwright Arthur Kopit.



and the acceptance of human frailty. The final installment will address each title individually based on their aesthetic and functional components, juxtaposing imperative segments within each production in order to emphasize Friedman’s strength in creating a more profound experience that impacts spectators with an emphasis on audience interaction as the imperative keystone. In juxtaposing the iconic titles, perhaps one will come to better comprehend the importance of theatre in an era primarily focused on the success of films, explicitly how the amalgamation of musical and theatrical elements combined with the overall dazzling production of live intimacy between actor and viewer creates a more lasting impression on audiences – one that inspires and transcends for generations to come.

### **III. CHAPTER ONE**

#### **1920s-1940s American Film and Theatre**

Prior to examining the contrasting impacts of each adaptation, one must first comprehend the imperative historical fundamentals that impacted Barry when creating the original script for the Broadway performance of *The Philadelphia Story*, specifically the economic crisis of 1929, the introduction of the Production Code in response to the emergence of progressive values, and the escapist interests of the masses from the beginning of the Great Depression and prior to the second world war. The collapse of the stock market played an essential role in the creation of a reflective society that subsequently published a plethora of *escapist* media, a genre that remained prominent for decades as failing industries struggled to find any means of ameliorating the economy. In “Flaming Youth: Gender in 1920s Hollywood,” Angela Schlater describes such media as cinematic and theatric productions that allowed for audiences to “escape,” as implied in its title, “from the drudgery of their own lives,” enjoying their “desired experiences” through positive depictions of society on a screen or stage (158). As aforementioned, the collapse of the

economy was detrimental to the United States, leaving many stranded with little income, or threatened with starvation and vagrancy in a society that was dependent upon circulating revenue; thus, the emphasis on this genre was vital to both the populace and industries. Those formerly comprising the lower tier of society's financial hierarchy were not the only ones to be crippled with the sudden dearth of revenue. Previously flourishing industries were also negatively affected – including both traditional theatre, in which nearly sixty percent of touring productions on Broadway were closed by 1932 (Eldridge 65), and the emerging cinematic industries that were met with startling declines and bankruptcies. Taking into consideration the hardships of both the populace and businesses dependent upon the interest of the population, the purpose of why scholars chose to define the period as one of contemplation and reflection becomes evident; those employed in Hollywood studios or the varying theatre unions across major cities – whether writers, producers or actors – were briefly considered to be of an equal caliber with their intended audiences and therefore chose to emphasize the notion of escapism in their media as a means of nostalgic reflection and mutual attraction. In other words, the national collapse briefly stabilized the social division where industry and consumer interest were initially separate. Additionally, fear of bankruptcy from the former led to the emergence of a communal emphasis on media that allowed for the masses to mentally escape the unhappiness of reality, as well as reflect on the aspects prior to the decline and determine whether or not they are in need of reform.

Both the film industry and playhouses scattered throughout the United States originally appealed to the masses with productions that mirrored their present struggles, perhaps with depictions of a family succeeding in their survival against all odds, or a generic romantic tale in the streets of a major city that once prospered. Simply depicting the contemporary lives of the

populace would not completely suffice as an adequate means to allow audiences to emotionally escape the growing void of debt and financial starvation, however. Individuals belonging to the middle and lower classes in the hierarchal system of society desired not the mundane, nor held any interest in paying to watch generic tales lamenting the loss of prosperity. They instead yearned for depictions of champagne in place of booze; their collective interest was more along the lines of being able to immerse themselves in the fantastic world of the elite that starkly foiled the barrenness of reality. Audiences also felt better about spending what little money they could acquire on a production portraying a fabricated realm similar to the ones that only the wealthiest were able to enjoy – the wild, “epitomized ‘conspicuously consuming’ elitist class” (Montieth 22) that entertained the extravagances reminiscent of an era before the immense economic slump. In addition to nostalgic depictions of the surreal, old money elitists, the productions were also diverting in their portrayals of controversial genres that were considered immorally progressive for the early twentieth century, yet alluring nonetheless to all classes of society.

The same notion of ‘sex sells’ in media for our present generation can also be applied to the decades after the 1930s. Spectators often sought to watch productions dealing with themes that were considered risqué and melodramatic at the time, deemed appropriate only if strictly emphasized as parts comprising a separate, fabricated diegesis outside of their moralistic culture. Such notion is reaffirmed by David Eldridge, asserting how films were meant to enliven audiences with depictions that satirized the wealthy, “laughing the depression out of the public mind” (67) with glamour and lavish entertainment that included salacious situations that were only acceptable to be fantasized. Schlater elucidates this argument, stating how actively attending performances not only preoccupied the masses from their unhappiness surrounding the national decline, but also “distracted [them]...from other, more dangerous and vice-ridden

activities” (158) that would be perceived in film or through a staged performance. The portrayals would adequately satiate all desires of those jaded and in search of some alleviation to the monotony of reality, allowing for men to live vicariously through productions that illustrate prospering realities of affluent men who enjoyed the company of progressive icons such as Katherine Hepburn and Ingrid Bergman, while women became enraptured with a means of escaping their socially enforced domesticity through the portrayals of “new women” that flaunted independence and feminine sexuality. The former appeal of such ‘indecent’ material led to creation of censorship guidelines collectively known as the Production Code of 1934, which prohibited the creation of tales, whether film or play, that had “a deteriorating tendency on the basic moralities or necessary social standards” (Fisher 147). Despite its intent, however, the regulation did not limit the progressive, escapist desires reflected in productions by scriptwriters who sought to explore such values; instead, they avoided censorship by publishing media that did not reshape or cause audiences to reevaluate their ideology pertaining to the current gender and societal values, but rather “tightened” (Schlater 208) the former principles through accentuated motifs that portrayed progressivism as consequential. In other words, scriptwriters continued to utilize the appeal of “new women” and the noncommittal attitude of the luxurious rich as a means to ensnare audiences; however, they successfully skirted the Production Code by emphasizing conclusions where protagonists’ revelations and transformations from sinner to saint justified the importance of societal conservatism and not the prior.

Both Cukor’s cinematic version of *The Philadelphia Story* and Friedman’s adaptation encompass the former notions discussed. As aforementioned, the cultural impacts of the economic crisis of 1929 and the Production Code of 1934 are both imperative in comprehending Barry’s original intent when creating the script for *The Philadelphia Story*, one that superficially

presents a tale of an elitist comedy featuring the hijinks of a statuette-like socialite and her handsome suitors who luxuriate in a champagne-filled party on the eve of her second wedding. Audiences are invited to misbehave together with Tracy and her versatile company, strung along in a satirized fable that allows for one to not only be captivated with the elegance and fieriness of the frigid heroine, but also be reminded of the value in minute aspects of life, appreciating honesty and realism through the genuine perspectives of characters such as the working-class duo Elizabeth Imbrie and Macaulay ‘Mike’ Connor. The plot is clearly escapist; however, it also follows the trend in utilizing a conclusion evoking reform as well as portraying an ongoing moral in order to skirt the progressive values included within. Such notion is asserted when analyzing the scene in which Liz and Mike are initially introduced. Their grounded dialogue adequately reflects spectators’ preconceived escapist perceptions of the wealthy upper class:

LIZ. (*Touring up left at the piano*) – Knickknacks–gimcracks–signed photographs! Wouldn’t you know you’d have to be as rich as the Lords to live in a dump like this?

MIKE. The young, rich, rapacious American female – there’s no other country where she exists.

LIZ. (*Comes in Center*) I’ll admit the idea of *her* scares me even. – Would I change places with her, for all her wealth and beauty? Boy! Just ask me. (Barry I.1.30-31)

The diction used when Liz describes the expensive artifacts in the parlor is not only cacophonous, but also contradictory in regards to the true value of each item. Though she apathetically redefines the expensive objects as insignificant and conventional, it is imperative to note how her dialogue is also meant to simultaneously draw the audience’s attention to each, emphasizing how they are perceived as both surreal and rare. While Liz’s dialogue can be primarily perceived as strengthening the notion of escapism, Mike’s dialogue endorses Barry’s

assertion of consequential behavior, purposefully addressing the societal abhorrence for the enlightened values in women at the cusp of the late 1930s. Using degrading diction such as “rapacious,” Mike counters Liz’s euphemistic description of Tracy as a “headstrong young lady” (Barry I.1.31), suggesting that Tracy’s impulsive ethics are deplorable and in need of reformation from the masculine sex. Although the former exchange is only one such instance reflecting the historical impressions, it is a significant depiction of how the former societal impacts have influenced playwrights and directors when creating such productions, a notion that has likewise impacted Cukor and Friedman.

Because both the cinematic and theatric versions derive from the original text, one might assume that the impacts from the historical events previously discussed would be clearly emphasized in the same method as Barry chose to do so; however, in juxtaposing the previous segment from both adaptations, the staged production not only successfully conveys the aforementioned themes more directly, but also does so in a more energetic and creative manner – one that starkly foils the lackluster dialogue and aesthetics perceived in the original text and film. Cukor begins the previously discussed segment in *The Philadelphia Story* with Liz and Mike leisurely touring the Lord’s richly decorated parlor, the unhurried tracking of the camera acting as a guide for the audience as the two actors finally recline on a sofa and deliver their lines. Although the entire film is monochromatic, one is clearly able to distinguish the luxury of the parlor despite the absence of exclusive props that support such notion. Elaborate patterns decorate the sofa in the foreground of the medium close-up while a plethora of books are set on towering shelves behind Liz and Mike as a means of symbolizing the progressive values that Tracy embodies. There are a few trinkets illuminated and scattered throughout the room that might catch one’s eye; however, due to the static positioning of the camera as an emphasis on

dialogue between the two characters who impatiently await the arrival of the Philadelphian idol, the importance and meanings of each prop is lessened and one might only observe them during a second viewing. The entirety of the segment is short in duration, an aspect accentuated by the lack of variety in blocking for each actor as they sit rigidly in the center of the set, in addition to the brisk manner in which they exchange their lines. In analyzing such factors, it becomes evident how Cukor's emphasis lies upon the in-depth narrative that is explored more in the cinematic version of *The Philadelphia Story* in comparison to the other versions, for it is similar to the preceding text in regards to its overall lackluster atmosphere and lack of any elaborate cinematic elements that could accentuate the escapist perception that the original text conveys. Furthermore, the segment limits the potential spectrum of reactions that the audience may have; in strictly narrowing the focal point of the scene to the dialogue between Liz and Mike, the audience is forced to *listen* rather than to react and *feel*, perhaps occasionally laughing quietly in response to the characters' satirical perceptions of aristocracy, but limited nonetheless.

In contrast, Friedman's live adaptation not only better conveys the nature of narrative expressed within this specific segment, but also does so in a manner that is more entertaining and memorable to spectators. In other words, the stylistic elements employed within the staged production of *High Society* allow for the audience to better immerse themselves within the intended fabricated diegesis as well as better identify with Liz and Mike who, like the audience, are suddenly swept up in the whirlwind of frivolous troubles. Unlike Cukor's adaptation, Friedman's begins the aforementioned segment with a transitioning period on the stage; maids and butlers hurriedly renovate the circular set into the appropriate setting for the segment, accentuating the mounting energy that is being constructed during the changeover. As each actor

comes on stage during the transition, they emerge with an armful of expensive props, gleaming under the harsh, unfiltered peripheral stage lights that accentuate the blue-blooded ambience.

The actors are also dancing their way through the aforesaid transition. Their fluid movements are perceived not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a reaffirmation of how this tale is meant to be viewed as a form of escapist media – a notion strengthened through the creative liberty of song and dance. Friedman borrows from Charles Walters' cinematic revival of *High Society* in 1956, incorporating Cole Porter's iconic songs featured in the musical to transcend the former film. For example, while Cukor's cinematic segment features a stagnant exchange of dry dialogue between Liz and Mike, the theatric version transforms the dialogue into the satirical song of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" while the actors parade around the spherical stage in a whirlwind of their own emerging energy. Liz and Mike utilize the gold and silver props in manners that the preceding cinematic versions (including Barry's play) do not – rearranging and tossing them amongst one another as a means of emphasizing the vexation of both characters, the latter having the tenacity to climb upon the piano at center stage and sit amongst the china glasses in imitated glory. This depiction is not only more energetic and lively, but it is also powerful in its impression on the contemporary audiences of today as well as ultimately conveys the dialogue between Liz and Mike with more emphasis on their vexation for those belonging to the wealthy upper-class. Spectators are invited to clap and react jovially, rather than quietly withhold their emotional responses as one would do so during either of the previous versions. They, too, identify with the two actors as they vivaciously disrupt the fabricated diegesis that emits stagnation and authority, foiling the performance of the actors perceived in the prior versions – their blocking reserved and insipid in comparison to the contemporary version. The utilization of such routine also allows for the audience to perceive the



actors as humanly approachable, reemphasizing the central moral serving as the driving function of the entire play – a notion to be further explored in chapters two and three.

#### **IV. CHAPTER TWO**

##### **Class Antipathy – Old Money, New Money and No Money**

While the historical context is a vital element to address, it is merely metaphorical framework supporting an intrinsic core – explicitly, the narrative. Therefore, an analysis exploring the pertinence of each subject is nonetheless essential in justifying how Friedman’s performance of *High Society* efficaciously succeeds Cukor’s precedent by delivering a more ardent and compelling enactment that illustrates the opposing impacts of cinema and traditional theatre. Film theorist David Bordwell states in *Poetics of Cinema* that the narrative is a “contingent universal of human experience,” an interdisciplinary art form that encompasses both the act of “organizing an experience” to where it can be correctly conveyed to audiences as well as the essential deliberation for how the experience will be received (2). In other words, the primary function of a narrative is to deliver the central themes that amalgamate the storyline in a method that is effective and creative. Additionally, it becomes essential for a director in both cinema and theatre to consider the role of the audience and how the inherent themes of a narrative are portrayed to those perceiving the production. Such notion is imperative due to the audience’s role in providing feedback that can determine the clarity and success of the narrative’s execution. An efficacious narrative includes one that engages its audience; the fundamental themes comprising it should be conveyed in a manner that resonates with spectators while also reflecting the referential and symptomatic subjects formerly addressed. Moreover, audiences should be able to interact with the story in different ways; not only are their minds engaged with the audible and visual emphasis provided as support for the conveyed message of

the performance, but a successful narrative should also appeal to spectators' imaginations and innate morals. It is indisputable that Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* and Friedman's *High Society* both deliver poignant narratives encompassing the prior subjects while also emphasizing the significant themes of Barry's original text; however, upon juxtaposing such themes, namely the tension of social class in addition to examining the manner in which each production delivers their narrative, the executive differences between each production become apparent with Friedman's theatric performance triumphing Cukor's cinematic equivalent as a result.

Recalling the disparity of the Depression in 1929 that crippled all individuals save for those with preexisting superfluous wealth, there is little surprise in Barry's choice to incorporate and explore the established tension of social hierarchy within the original text of *The Philadelphia Story*. Such theme, however, is integrated in a manner that not only subtly criticizes class antagonism, an evident, time-appropriate sentiment felt by those less privileged, but also reinforces the introspective moral that abides the ideology imposed by the Production Code of 1934. The interactions between characters of dissimilar classes effectively portray the conflicting perspectives; although, instead of justifying their harbored antagonism, their prejudiced sentiments culminate into private revelations that allow the characters to reassess their views and accept their faults in a manner that simultaneously impacts spectators.

A prime example of two characters foiling one another as a means of highlighting class antipathy includes Tracy's former well-to-do husband C.K. Dexter Haven and her current, "new money" beau George Kittredge. Upon juxtaposing both characters, the evident dissimilarities between them that emerge throughout the course of the narrative allow for audiences to better comprehend the manner in which the theme is meant to be interpreted. The explicit contrast between Dexter and George concerns their social statuses – precisely, Dexter's inherited wealth

and status as an old money socialite and George's earned status as a coal tycoon whose newly acquired prosperity netted him the title as a "national hero" responsible for making "drooping family incomes...revive again" (Barry I.1.29). Dexter's characterization is primarily disliked by spectators and characters alike; his wit is considered condescending (II.1.60) by George while his impressive capability to design and construct extravagant "class boats" is emphasized (and denounced) as a frivolous hobby that is "very upper class" (I.1.31). He is additionally met with hostility from Tracy herself when he remarks that she is marrying "beneath" her in "mind and imagination" (II.1.57) despite his earnest conduct regarding her second betrothal. On the contrary, George is perceived as the quintessence of American success; his desire to ascend the hierarchal tiers of society is praised in multiple scenes by various characters comprising dissimilar social spheres and by Dexter himself.

Exteriorly, such observations provide evidence in the argument that Barry is overtly criticizing and satirizing the upper crust of society – a tactic not uncommon for escapist films that are directed towards an audience of middle to lower class individuals. However, Barry masterfully emphasizes the opposite. The general narrative does not negatively impact either social class; instead, Barry derides each in an escapist manner while stressing the comparable traits between the hierarchal tiers and highlighting the inherent moral of understanding one's humanity that underlies both. Arthur Kopit, renowned American dramatist and playwright of the 1998 text of *High Society*, confirms the prior notion by describing how the plot is intended to be interpreted as one of healing – a play of "champagne and bubbles, but...also a romp over an abyss" that conveys the futility of one's resentment towards those who are born into money (Holden 1998). After introducing the explicit traits of both characters in a manner that suggests sympathy for the lower class and antipathy for the higher, Barry gradually unveils the

undisclosed acuties that are ironic and foil the initial beliefs of each character. Dexter, despite his status as an old money patrician, is exposed as the neutral, compassionate character in the narrative; he is indifferent towards class antagonism, valuing the wisdom gained from self-reflection, the acceptance of human frailty and the pursuit of one's desires regardless of money to be made or lost in the act. Such traits are often associated with those *without* superfluous wealth. Gregory Baisden elucidates that Dexter's necessary revelation that reaffirms his ideals occurs off-screen and separate from the text (7); however, in the midst admonishing Tracy (and inadvertently Mike) for her unyielding intolerance towards the mistakes of others outside of her social sphere in Act II, scene one, his neutral ideals and favorable transformation are reaffirmed through his dialogue:

DEXTER. (*Right*) – It's astonishing what money can do for people, don't you agree, Mr. Connor? Not too much, you know, – just more than enough...

.....

TRACY. (*Over Right*) You seem quite contemptuous of me, all of a sudden.

DEXTER. (*Crossing to her*) Not of you, Red, never of you. You could be the damndest, finest woman on this earth. If I'm contemptuous of anything, it's of something in you you either can't help, or make no attempt to; your so-called "strength" – your prejudice against weakness – your blank intolerance –

TRACY. Is that all?

DEXTER. That's the gist of it; because you'll never be a first class woman or a first class human being, 'till you have learned to have some regard for human frailty. It's a pity your own foot can't slip a little sometimes... (Barry II.1.54-57)

The diction employed, such as “contemptuous,” “prejudice” and the repetition of “class,” reaffirms the notion of Dexter’s neutral perspective. His punitive dialogue suggests his disdain for Tracy’s unfounded superiority and hypocritical belief of neutrality for herself.

George Kittredge, in contrast, foils Dexter upon being revealed as a social climber harboring the unconscious and selfish desire to solidify his status amongst the finest of the American blue-bloods. Such notion is evident in Act II, scene one, in which George expresses his desire to create “a grand life” with the aid of his affluent fiancée:

GEORGE. Our little house on the river up there. I’d like people to consider it an honor to be asked there.

TRACY. Why an honor, especially?

GEORGE. We’re going to represent something, Tracy – something straight and sound and fine. – (*Looks off Right*) And then perhaps young Mr. Haven may be somewhat less condescending. (II.1.60)

George’s dialogue is seemingly egotistical; his true desire manifests in his words, highlighting his arrogance and pursuit to iconize his own self. Rather than loving Tracy as an imperfect woman too proud to admit her blunders, George epitomizes her as a “queen” to be revered, a “beautiful purity” in the form of an untouchable ornament that is “cool and fine” (II.1.60). Barry’s criticism reaches its apex in the dialogue following the aforementioned declarations, solidifying George’s unconscious perception of Tracy as an emblem portraying the superior American class:

GEORGE. (*Sits on Upstage side of chaise*) Oh, it’s grand, Tracy – it’s just grand!

Everyone feels it about you. It’s what I first worshipped you for, Tracy, from afar.

TRACY. George, listen—

GEORGE. First, now, and always! (*Leans toward her*) Only from a little nearer now,  
Eh – darling?

TRACY. I don't want to be worshipped! I want to be loved! (II.1.60)

Barry masterfully weaves an underlying message that coexists with the explicit meaning of the dialogue. The superficial meaning of George's declaration is to parallel Tracy's own perception of her sanctity; however, one can additionally interpret George's dialogue as a declaration of his personal desire to worship and revere her *class* and social status. With marriage, George fantasizes that he will finally have his place amongst her *kind* rather than simply worshipping the Lords from afar; although, such fantasy is ultimately shattered during the conclusion of Act III with his final statement – namely, his antagonistic remark of Tracy and Dexter belonging to a “rotten class...on its way out” (III.1.115) – verifying his antagonistic sentiments towards those with old money. By doing so, Barry efficaciously mirrors and criticizes the ideology of his audience, aiming to create an impact that will surely ignite self-reflection outside of the play.

Aside from the characters Dexter and George, an additional, but principal example demonstrating the class antipathy is perceivable upon analyzing the relationship established between affluent Tracy Lord and the cynical author-turned-reporter Macaulay “Mike” Connor. Class division is immediately evident upon contrasting the surnames of both characters. The primary function of the term “Lord” can be perceived as a reaffirmation of Tracy's social status; though, it additionally functions as a supportive allusion to the aristocratic perception she holds for both herself and those around her. Barry confirms this notion in Act I, scene one of *The Philadelphia Story* with the dialogue between Dinah and Margarete Lord providing insight to Tracy's prejudices:

DINAH. (*Crosses to Left Center to Margarete*) She's sort of – you know – *hard*, isn't she?

MARGARETE. Not hard – none of my children is that, I hope. Tracy sets exceptionally high standards for herself, that's all, and although she lives up to them, other people aren't always quite able to. (I.1.16)

Although the dialogue is not explicitly given from Tracy herself, one is able to deduce that her inflexible exterior derives from her family's patrician lifestyle – a notion that, perhaps, one can further by comparing the Lords' privileged nuances to those of traditional lords and ladies. Her affluence fuels her perception of herself as an impenetrable idol, despite her defiance in such accusation. The former is a notion affirmed by the statements of her father Seth Lord, who refers to her as the incarnate of "Justice with her shining sword" (I.1.45) as well as by Dexter Haven who reprimands her staunch attitude akin to a "virgin goddess" that is "generous to a fault" save for pardoning the errors of others around her (II.1.54-55).

Whereas Tracy epitomizes the elite, Mike's demeanor and surname conversely signify the sentiments of the lower tiers of society; his evident disdain parallels the contempt of comparable spectators who are without the luxury of superfluous wealth. Indubitably, the name "connor" is specified to Mike as subtle emphasis on his social status and derisive attitude towards the rest of the affluent cast; his surname is banal rather than distinct when compared to "Lord" or "Haven" – the latter of which he sneeringly remarks as "upper class" while reproachfully pondering the behavior of "a guy [named] 'C.K. Dexter Haven'" (I.1.31). Moreover, one can interpret the significance of "Macaulay" as emphasizing Mike's class antagonism. Upon being asked the derivation of his name in Act I, scene one by Tracy herself, Mike tersely replies that his father taught English History, though he prefers "Mike" as an

alternative to the former (I.1.35). The context of the dialogue suggests that Barry is alluding to the renowned patrician Lord Macaulay – born Thomas Babington in 19<sup>th</sup> century England – who chronicled the history of England in a plethora of literary masterpieces (“Thomas Babington – Lord Macaulay” 2016). Mike’s averseness towards the derivation of his full name justifies his prejudices against the upper-class, his bigotry deriving from his faux belief that the rich are indolent, *old money* “hellions” (Barry I.1.37) who inherit their wealth and social status rather than earning it (II.1.50).

Comparable to the manipulation of Dexter and George’s representations as a means of unveiling both characters’ disguised dissimilarities, the complex relationship between Tracy and Mike reaches its apex in both scenes of Act II to affirm the narrative’s comprehensive moral of human frailty that is irrespective of class – a previously discussed effect stemming from the installation of the Production Code. The contrasting prejudices of the aforementioned characters culminate into a series of self-admissions that constructively change their inherent beliefs and erase their preconceived biases; however, unlike the Dexter and George’s representations, Barry instead utilizes the contrasting perceptions of Tracy and Mike as a method of emphasizing their likeness to one another in spite of their social gaps. The preconceived partialities of Tracy and Mike are momentarily diminished when the former locates a selection of poetry written by the latter in her library, discovering his shared tendency of fabricating a façade that masks his true sentiments in Act II, scene one:

TRACY. (*Crossing to back of Center table*) Please wait a minute.

MIKE. (*Back Right of Center Table*) With pleasure. (*Turns where he is. She goes to him; looks at him wonderingly*) What’s the matter?

TRACY. I’ve been reading these stories. They’re so damned beautiful.



.....  
 I can't make you out at all, now.

MIKE. Really? I thought I was easy.

TRACY. So did I, but you're not. (Crossing down Center) You talk big and tough – and then you write like this. Which is which?

MIKE. I guess I'm both.

TRACY. No – I believe you put the toughness on, to save your own skin.

MIKE. You think?

TRACY. Yes. *I* know a little about that –

MIKE. Do you?

TRACY. Quite a lot. (*They look at each other for a moment. Then, Tracy laughs a little embarrassedly and glances away*) ... (II.1.49-50)

Baisden argues that the above scene is imperative in “exposing the falsity” derived from their social statuses, revealing an amity between Tracy and Mike that “begins within which we may rightly see a kind of spiritual alliance toward self-revelation” (6). Barry’s use of stage directions strengthens such notion; the diction employed, such as “wonderingly,” and the explicit action of both characters gazing at one another implicitly suggests the budding connection that ultimately bridges their social gap and allows for both characters to understand the other’s comparable flaw of human frailty. The revelations of both characters are not actualized until Act II, scene two, however, in which both characters’ narrow-minded presumptions are diminished permanently after a series of condemnatory remarks:

MIKE. How do you mean, I'm "a snob"?

TRACY. You're the worst kind there is: an intellectual snob. You've made up your mind awfully young, it seems to me.

.....  
 You're just a mass of prejudices, aren't you? You're so much thought and so little feeling, Professor. (*Goes Right*)

MIKE. Oh, I am, am I?

TRACY. Yes, you am, are you!<sup>2</sup> (*Stops and turns on him*) Your damned intolerance [...] infuriates me!

.....  
 MIKE. (*Right center*) You've got all the arrogance of your class, all right, haven't you?

TRACY. (*Right*) Holy suds, what have "classes" to do with it? [...] Why? What do they matter – except for the people in them? George comes from the so-called "lower class," Dexter comes from the upper. Well? (II.2.77-78)

Here, Tracy harbors an unjust bias against "snobs" like Mike; however, despite her convictions, the primary function of her sentiments parallels Barry's emphasis in defusing class antagonism. The confrontation of Mike and Tracy finishes with a mutual comprehension between each character and, respectively, each class; Mike, contradicting his former bigotries, sympathetically offers to save Tracy's threatened social status while the latter, benefitting additionally from the exposed partialities of Dexter and George, concludes the play in confidence by casting off her negative self-perception of absolute sanctity in favor of feeling human (III.1.120).

Undeniably, both George Cukor's cinematic adaptation of *The Philadelphia Story* and Maria Friedman's contemporary theatric revival of *High Society* encompass class antipathy in

---

<sup>2</sup> This is a direct quote. Tracy phrases her answer in a manner that mocks Mike's previous question.

their narratives as an imperative theme that shapes the overall plot. Both directors amply borrow from Barry's original text, utilizing the vital relationships of the four primary characters – precisely, Dexter, George, Tracy and Mike – in delivering a conclusion emphasizing the veiled moral of human frailty that spectators can reflect upon. Each director, however, has chosen to accentuate the former theme in a dissimilar method that affects audiences' interpretations of the comprehensive narrative. While Cukor's film concludes by primarily exemplifying the unjust sentiments of the lower class towards the well-off upper crust of society and showcasing the redemption of Tracy Lord, Friedman's performance delivers a more interactive conclusion that resonates with audiences and replicates Barry's specific neutrality towards class antipathy.

To reiterate, Cukor's narrative for *The Philadelphia Story* thoroughly reflects the essential elements comprising the preceding text written by Philip Barry, incorporating the necessary unveiled motives of Dexter Haven and George Kittredge while simultaneously accentuating the shared fragilities of the initially dissimilar pair, Tracy Lord and Mike Connor. Such observation is evident upon analyzing the actors' portrayals of each character in the final sequence of the comprehensive plot – precisely, Act II of Friedman's equivalent. The success of this specific sequence and its reflection of Barry's theme of social tension derives from the actors' skills in adequately expressing their character's intrinsic flaws and conclusive understandings; after all, the role of an actor can also influence the execution of themes within the narrative. Although all of the actors efficaciously depict their characters' changes, there is an undeniable emphasis on Katharine Hepburn's portrayal of Tracy Lord. The actress is extraordinary in her performance of Tracy, effortlessly weaving her own characteristics – that is, her iconic transatlantic accent, proud demeanor and natural aversion to stereotypical femininity (Shoard 2006) – into the revered, haughty persona that iconizes her character and the stereotypes

of her social class. Moreover, in accordance with Barry's desire for a contemplative resolution, Hepburn reveals a vulnerable side of Tracy by depicting her as a woman with fragile passions during the final sequence of the film; a woman who readily accepts her responsibilities and imperfections as inherent characteristics of humanity.

The other actors also efficaciously depict their characters' revelations. In Cukor's film, Cary Grant portrays Dexter in a manner that allows audiences to perceive his character's neutrality towards the complex subject of class antipathy through his body language; his posture is casual throughout the entirety of the final sequence whereas George (John Howard) remains rigid, upright and imposing. Such observations strengthen the notion of both characters' attitudes – Dexter having an eased, unbiased perspective of the narrative's ongoing dilemma while George remains haughty and prideful as emphasis on his desire to belong amongst the American patricians. However, there is also an additional amount of arrogance to Grant's portrayal, one that stresses his character's manipulative tendencies, masculinity and status in comparison to that of James Stewart's portrayal of Mike and John Howard's depiction of George. Stewart also adequately depicts Mike's developed sympathy for Tracy as he defends her against George's reprimand; his action of maneuvering himself between her and George emphasizes the imperative connection formed between two individuals of dissimilar social spheres. The gentle, but steady manner in which Stewart delivers his lines also strengthens such notion; it becomes evident to spectators that both characters have established a mutual understanding of one another, regardless of the effects of champagne or trivial class differences.

The stylistic mechanics of film aid in actualizing the performances of each actor; the alternation of medium and close up shots allow for spectators to carefully perceive the emotions of each actor, strengthening their representations of each character and their significance in

visually conveying their character's self-rumination. Additionally, due to cinema's advantage in dictating the selective focus of spectators, the audience is able to identify with the sentiments that are being portrayed onscreen while also sympathizing with the unspoken narrative that is depicted through the blocking and enunciation of varying lines. Despite the amalgamated talent onscreen, however, the dearth of diversity in narrative pacing and visualization ultimately detracts from the impact of the theme in Cukor's adaptation. The narrative feels forced in areas, lacking the escapist satire that is humorous and blithe – perhaps as an effect deriving from the executive decisions that dominated the Hollywood era of cinema. Nonetheless, the execution of Cukor's sequence contrasts Philip Barry's desire for a lighthearted conclusion in favor of a dramatic finish that reinforces the talent of struggling starlet Hepburn and her renowned cast. Comparable to Cukor's adaptation, Maria Friedman also emphasizes class antagonism within *High Society*, borrowing from Philip Barry's text in utilizing the primary characters and the actors portraying them to efficiently accentuate its significance to the narrative. Unlike preceding adaptations of *The Philadelphia Story*, Friedman's execution of the narrative is notably unique and contemporary. The narrative is delivered by the actors in a manner that better encompasses Barry's original conception of a storyline, one that jovially rather than dramatically explores referential and symptomatic themes while underscoring the significance of every actor and their respective characters' impact instead of exclusively glorifying the role of Tracy. *High Society* is dissimilar to other variations by conveying class antipathy in an exuberant, artistic performance that not only accentuates the wit and escapist satire of the comprehensive moral shaping the original script, but likewise avoids antagonizing one specific class in favor of encouraging spectators of all upbringings to reflect upon the established theme together with the characters of the play.

Friedman's directive success is perceivable upon analyzing the actors' portrayals of the four main characters and the execution of the narrative in the final scene of Act II. Contrasting Hepburn's sovereign and progressive depiction of Tracy Lord in Cukor's cinematic adaptation, Kate Fleetwood reveals an "angular, abrasive and affectionless" (Collins 2015) version of Tracy whose unsympathetic and stressed indifference flawlessly epitomizes the iconic image of Tracy's unconscious, metaphorical guise as Justice brandishing her rapier against the mistakes of those around her. Fleetwood incorporates an imposing femininity to her characterization of Tracy, one that is unlike the "magnetism derived from wealth and beauty" that iconized Grace Kelley in Walters' *High Society* of 1956 (Lloyd 2015) or the masculine nuances of Hepburn in Cukor's preceding film by emphasizing "a core of internal warmth, compassion and understanding hidden under a bravado of indifference, quips and quibbles" (Collins 2015). Although some critics argue that Fleetwood was, perhaps, too firm in her depiction of Tracy, her ability to deliver an exemplary example of Tracy's emotional change is unrivaled. Tracy's transformation is perceivable through Fleetwood's gradual transition in blocking in both acts; her initial demeanor of insensitivity gradually transforms into one comprised of sincerity and compassion. Critic Susannah Clapp elaborates on her impeccable portrayal, stating that "[Fleetwood] chucks Hepburn's insouciance...and drawling asperity" in favor of emphasizing Tracy's inner passions ("High Society Review" 2015). She presents a variety of reactions that truly form the woman that Tracy *is*; that is, she displays Tracy's inner sadness, wit and boldness as an American female rather than solely exemplifying her haughtiness as a trait that defines her. Such interpretation is a contemporary addition exclusively in Friedman's production, though it highlights Barry's primary notion for Tracy's characterization by effectively portraying the liberation of her self-imposed sanctity and the acceptance of her inherent flaws.

Tracy's character progression is not the exclusive focus of the narrative in Friedman's *High Society*. While Cukor's narrative emphasizes the opposite due to Hepburn's close involvement with the executive decisions being made, Friedman's modern adaptation explores other characters' developments through supplementary musical interludes that substitute dialogue – an important stylistic component that will be discussed in chapter three. One must also credit the other actors themselves who, like Fleetwood, choose to exemplify the resolves and passions of their characters in a manner that is not quite as severe or dramatic. In Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story*, Cary Grant's representation of Dexter Haven emphasized his character as virile and imposing – there is little doubt that his tailored suits and forthright behavior functioned as a means of subtly and visually reinforcing male superiority over equally broadminded Katharine Hepburn. On the contrary, Rupert Young portrays Dexter as a character equal to Fleetwood's interpretation of Tracy Lord in spirit, passion and stature, fully incorporating Barry's intent for the character to function as a less imposing, neutral character of the narrative compared to the other male leads. Young portrays Dexter as charismatic rather than manipulative; he is lithe, "loose-limbed...with an old-fashioned cheeky chivalry" (Williams 2015) that highlights his affluence while also depicting him as amiable and openhearted. He does not eclipse Fleetwood's portrayal of Tracy Lord; instead, his acting strengthens her spirited and progressive depiction, dually emphasizing her femininity and masculinity in specific scenes. Spectators are also able to better grasp Dexter's affable behavior with the incorporation of musical interludes in Friedman's *High Society*. The included songs, namely the numbers titled "True Love," "Once Upon a Time" and "Samantha" function as a creative method of generating depth to his character. The audience is better able to comprehend and formulate their own interpretations of his charisma and neutrality towards social tension, not only approving of his

outburst towards Tracy's hypocrisy in Act I, but also approving of his indifference towards George and Mike's class antipathy throughout the narrative and in the finale of Act II.

The prejudiced perceptions of Mike Connor and George Kittredge are similarly better emphasized by their actors in Friedman's theatric adaptation due to narrative dissimilarities and the incorporation of musical numbers that strengthens their sentiments towards the comprehensive theme of class antagonism and self-acceptance. Unlike James Stewart's interpreted demeanor of Mike in Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story*, Jamie Parker's representation is beneficially dissimilar by characterizing Mike as man that is both self-depreciative and astutely pensive about the unfair situation he has been placed into. Parker's portrayal of Mike is also wittier than his preceding counterparts; he is not as bitter as Stewart's portrayal and deals with social criticism by quickly retorting with comical quips that voice the frank sentiments of the audience and other characters sharing similar views. The supplementary song "He's a Right Guy" reinforces such statement; the musical laments of Liz Imbrie on Mike's veiled compassion silenced by his rough exterior – a song that is notably directed *towards* the audience in the form of a monologue – confirms the narrative's intent of emphasizing Mike's newfound sympathy, one that solidifies his character development towards sympathizing with those belonging to the upper tier of social hierarchy. Moreover, such inclusion can be interpreted as an additional method of strengthening the narrative's comprehensive theme while also incorporating the audience to better comprehend the transformations each character undergoes.

The depiction of George Kittredge is, perhaps, the most significant example denoting Friedman's success in delivering a more effective and creative narrative in comparison to Cukor's cinematic adaptation. Not only does actor Richard Grieve truly encompass the insipidness of George's character that is minimally explored in other adaptations, but his altered



departure in the concluding scene of Act II also incorporates the audience by positively (as well as negatively) altering their personal sentiments in a style that is only achievable in theatre. Throughout Friedman's production, the audience is given numerous comedic glimpses of George's impending reveal as the character harboring the greatest antagonism towards social class. Many of the cast members – specifically the servants and Tracy's darling younger sister Dinah Lord – avoid contact with George through humorously staged exits off stage and quiet asides of dislike that are directed towards spectators to evoke their laughter and approval. Their evasive blocking can be primarily perceived as added form of humor, accenting the overall escapism and appeal of the narrative; however, one may also interpret their actions as additional emphasis on the narrative's intent for the audience to decipher George's guise as a victim of class antipathy. Grieve effortlessly supports his character's role by persistently acting stiff and imposing in his posture and actions. An example of such competent acting is perceivable in the beginning of Act II, scene one during the musical interlude "Let's Misbehave," in which Grieve portrays George as a bumbling spoilsport outmatched by his feisty bride-to-be. George attempts to restrain his inebriated fiancée, pursuing her throughout the choreographed sequence in a comedic routine that exhibits his gaucherie and arrogance. Such technique should not be discredited as mere humor or entertainment; rather, it should be perceived as one that encompasses the former while also simultaneously revealing implicit details of characters. The sufficient examples provided of George's true behavior make it easier for spectators to fully comprehend his dramatic exit in Friedman's conclusion that is dissimilar to the final sequence of Cukor's cinematic counterpart.

Although Cukor's final sequence concludes the narrative on a positive note, the execution of scene is a bit cliché and lacks an impact that affects the audience directly upon viewing it.

More specifically, the conclusion is a trite finish that centers on Hepburn's redemption as a struggling actress rather than impacting the audience's personal notions towards the comprehensive theme of the central plot. Such statement does not discredit the success of the entire film, but rather reiterates the notion of how Friedman's executive differences better convey Philip Barry's envisioned experience when creating the storyline for the original text of *The Philadelphia Story*. The first constructive difference of Friedman's conclusive scene in Act II is George Kittredge's dramatic exit, one that effectively removes his neutral façade and directly incorporates the audience into the terse situation. His dialogue and staging are initially identical to both Cukor's and Barry's narratives; George whirls on Dexter and Tracy upon realizing his potential marriage to the latter socialite is in shambles, declaring that they – the Lords as well as Dexter himself – belong to a “rotten class” and are inevitably “on [their] way out” of society (Barry III.1.116). While George is directed to exit after this line, Richard Grieve takes George's anger and bitterness forward with the added line, “I don't belong here and I never did” (Billington 2015). Grieve wonderfully addresses the audience while also directing his statement at the gathered cast. He bitterly points at his fellow cast members, his anger clearly reflected at Tracy and Dexter who both represent the luxurious socialites of American society. Increasing his anger, however, he additionally considers the space around him, briefly directing his angered gaze in varying directions of seated audience members before bitterly exiting off stage through an aisle dividing sections of seated viewers. His combined dialogue and blocking not only suggest the harbored antipathy George has towards those with old money, but such techniques also creatively integrate spectators by addressing them as esteemed guests witnessing the resolved (and established) social tensions of *High Society's* narrative.

The imperative function of audience participation (a concept to be explored in greater detail in chapter three) is also utilized throughout the conclusion, specifically through the actions of Tracy and Dexter. Following George's unpleasant departure, there is a deliberately uncomfortable ambience, one that Tracy maturely attempts to defuse with a speech to her wedding guests while Dexter humorously "proposes" marriage to her as a desired option of escaping the situation. Unlike Cukor's sequence, which utilized extra actors as wedding guests for Tracy to address, Friedman's narrative is staged in manner where Tracy addresses the audience instead of additional cast members. The effect of such technique – particularly one that is attempted in film with weak results, though generally efficacious in theatre performances – generates a unanimous understanding between spectators and the narrative that is being conveyed by the actors on stage. Viewers are able to respond with their personal sentiments and beliefs regarding the themes being presented, approving or disagreeing with the characters and their interpretations of imperative subjects due to their treatment and inclusion as active members of the narrative.

George Cukor's execution of the narrative in his cinematic adaptation *The Philadelphia Story* is indubitably enjoyable, incorporating Philip Barry's essential themes of class antipathy and the acceptance of one's imperfections in a method that strengthens the overall impact of the film on its audience. Likewise, Friedman's *High Society* also conveys the aforementioned themes in an efficacious narrative; however, unlike its predecessor, the latter's narrative is innovative and improved to where it explores the desired impact of the referential and symptomatic themes and invites audiences to share their own sentiments towards the prior subjects. Friedman's success in delivering a more poignant, escapist narrative, however, is attributed, once again, to the creative liberties that eternalize drama – artistic techniques that cinema ultimately lacks.

Opposed to viewing the shared symptomatic themes of both adaptations via a screen devoid of interpersonal connection, spectators of Friedman's *High Society* are able to form an intimate relationship with the performers. They are impacted by the characters' choices and sentiments depicted on stage – perhaps even inspired to alter their own perceptions upon perceiving the lighthearted conclusion emphasizing the futility of class antipathy due to theatre's unique ability to fabricate a sense of reality that is seemingly more natural than the combined effects of a camera and a microphone in cinema. Analyzing the executive differences of delivering a narrative between a play and film is merely one component that comprises the larger academic debate between the two, however. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend how the artistic liberties of theatre create a more compelling and engaging experience specifically utilizing the dissimilarities of George Cukor's cinematic adaptation *The Philadelphia Story* and Maria Friedman's contemporary play *High Society*, one must delve further into the debate by juxtaposing the stylistic mechanics comprising both artistic subjects – namely, the mise-en-scene fundamentals of cinema and the aesthetic rudiments of theatre that augment and actualize each production's diegesis and intrinsic themes.

### **V. CHAPTER THREE**

In theatre, realism is achieved through combined visual and audio aesthetics. Such components include the overall staging, set design – which includes props, costuming and lighting – and other technicalities. The fundamentals of film function similarly and are collectively referred to as the mise-en-scene and cinematography components of film, both of which are applied to all sequences and scenes. The components in both studies are imperative in understanding the differing impacts of Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* and Friedman's *High Society*. If one were to strip away the stylistic components from each production, the result is a

dialogue that is almost devoid of emotion or direction. Although text has the potential to be impactful alone, the amalgamated components in each production are the source for actualizing the visual and sensual diegesis that is meant to be expressed outside of the narratives and captivate audiences. Such aspects are the metaphorical backbone of both performances, answering the “statement” or basis of what needs to be constructed and utilized to effectively convey the purpose of the text to the audience (Campbell 21). Both Cukor and Friedman successfully utilize the previous components to reinforce the overall narrative of the original text, fabricating an appealing diegesis that solidifies the realism needed to charm audiences. By juxtaposing the former rudiments, the directors’ differences become starkly evident. Friedman’s production not only succeeds at being performed more artistically and entertainingly, but it also differs by allowing for a more profound, lasting impact due to the unique incorporation of audience participation that Cukor’s film lacks.

### **The Role of Costumes**

One might assume that the importance of costume design is solely limited to accentuating the visual appeal of the set to audiences in both cinema and theatre; however, like the other imperative components that amalgamate any performance, there are additional functions for characters’ costumes that ultimately affect the manner in which a performance is received. Scholar Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones explains how designers responsible for fashioning the costumes must not only create them as a means to reinforce “the overall visual system” of the play or film, but also as symbolic art forms that “reflect the status and individuality of different characters” (8). Building upon Llewellyn-Jones’ statement, one can perceive costumes as flexible, tangible forms of art that strengthen the set’s realism and implicit characteristics specific to each character. Moreover, their purpose is to act as a method of tacitly portraying temporal

progression, character development, and the needed emphasis on themes pertaining to a performance's narrative. A successful costume, much like the other rudiments comprising the overall design, should communicate with the audience; not only must the design connect with the actors, the setting and the stage, but it should also incorporate the audience by reflecting their cultural influences along with innovative trends that allow for the costume to be easily distinguishable from any other performance or adaptation of the specific play or film. Both Cukor and Friedman's respective designers (and their corresponding teams) effectively encapsulate the prior notions in their selection of costumes for both *The Philadelphia Story* and the Old Vic's *High Society*. It is undeniable that Cukor's team – one dependent upon the input from both starlet Katharine Hepburn and the illustrious designer Adrian Adolf Greenberg – fabricated iconic costumes that are subjectively revolutionary in the realm of fashion. Upon examining how the costumes impact the audiences, Friedman's designers exceed the former by thoroughly incorporating the audience as active guests and giving greater emphasis in their designs to the escapist theme that underlies the narrative.

Although all of the actors in both *The Philadelphia Story* and *High Society* wear costumes that encompass the varying functions previously touched upon, a primary character that efficaciously portrays the differing impacts of costumes in both productions is Tracy Lord, the dynamic lead whose varying wardrobe serves as another means of reinforcing her affluent status and “goddess-like” arrogance. The costume in which Tracy dons in the opening sequence of the film is a fashionable pantsuit resembling menswear, a bold decision from designer Adrian as a means to immediately denote Tracy's progressive defiance towards stereotypical gender roles. Despite its masculinity, the pantsuit is fashioned from elegant material in order to subtly signify her femininity. The design is a stark contrast in both fabric and style to the sheer,

feminine wedding gown woven from varying layers of cream-colored silk that Tracy wears in the final sequence of the film. In comparing both, one can easily perceive how the juxtaposition of the costumes highlights character progression, mimicking Tracy's development from a reserved goddess with masculine, authoritative tendencies to a girlish model of renewed warmth.

In addition to the pantsuit and wedding gown, the Grecian cream-colored costume worn by Tracy during the anticipated party in Act II also highlights both her intrepid behaviour and chic style – the latter serving as the primary emphasis of the design despite the focus of the narrative favouring her change in demeanour. The sequence is meant to be perceived as an event that is lavish and excessive, one that stresses the thawing of a haughty socialite through an unrestrained night of entertainment fuelled with champagne and midnight follies; however, in analysing the artistic designs for Tracy's gown, namely the spaulder-shaped shoulder pads, tight corset and golden seams on tiered silk, the opposite conclusion can be drawn. The costume *does* reflect the necessary comparison between Tracy's sentiments and those of a cold idol; however, there is an evident dearth of emphasis in the costume that is needed to reinforce the importance of her intoxication – an aspect reflected in the narrative that serves as an important anchor in comprehending her complexity. The costume lacks the energy suggested from the manner in which the scene is established and meant to be perceived. By choosing to reflect Hepburn's prominence as a fashion icon in her modish gown, the choice diminishes the potential creative impact of the costume and ultimately overshadows its significance to the overall scene. To reiterate, the costumes employed in Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* effectively highlight Tracy's growth as a dynamic character while also serving as exquisite attractions by themselves; however, they ultimately lack the escapist lure suggested in the original narrative when compared to the costumes designed by Tom Pye in Friedman's *High Society*. As fashion

historian Rebecca C. Tuite states in The Old Vic's *High Society* program, those privileged in enjoying the cushioned lifestyle of the American elite often perceived their fashion "as an essential means of express[ing]...status and wealth" (27-30); thus, it is imperative that such notion is carefully applied to the costumes utilized within the play in order to achieve a sense of realism, reflecting the cultural norms of the upper-class.

Other than solidifying realism, the purpose of such finery should extend beyond the notion of simply reflecting wealth and status. It should also encompass the perspective of the audience. More specifically, the costumes should be perceived as methods of actualizing the setting and narrative, having a certain degree of innovation to them that dazzles audiences with designs that are contemporary, timeless and considered surreal. Unlike Cukor's cinematic adaptation, *High Society* charms audiences by shifting the focus of the costumes from acting as a means of support in distinguishing iconic celebrities to reflecting elitist modesty while also emphasizing the charismatic allure of the play itself. Moreover, Pye's costumes encompass both the narrative's functions and the escapist perception that Philip Barry desired to establish in the original script. They are exquisite, gaudy and visually mesmerizing for one to observe in motion; the costume designs not only intensify the sensation of the elitist lifestyle through the swirling electricity emitting from the actors performing, but they are also perceived as fantastic and escapist to audiences born beyond the decades in which the old-money socialites of America were prominent. Susannah Clapp elaborates on Pye's beguiling designs, describing the costumes of cast members in the anticipated party at the beginning of Act II as a culmination of "visual gorgeousness" with members of the cast dressed in dashing tuxes, "bell-shaped skirts," "low bodices" and vibrant "swirling layers of underskirt" that leave the audience revelling. In contrast to Cukor's film, one filled with "suggestive" designs that are reserved and strictly used as brief



visual appeal, Pye's costumes are "sexy," vividly enticing with saturated hues and layers of fabric that ultimately better convey the frivolous tendencies of those with superfluous wealth succumbing to a night of passion and alcohol (Clapp 2015).

Tom Pye's notion of designing costumes that incorporate the transitioning of modesty into alluring radiance can also be applied to primary characters in Friedman's play – Tracy Lord serving as a prominent example benefitting from the creative shift. Similar to Cukor's portrayal, the costumes utilized for Tracy in *High Society* are careful to denote the importance of her transformation from dispassionate to empathetic. The designs employed are vivid and memorable, functioning as an additional means of binding the costume seamlessly into the narrative while also reflecting the escapist theme and Tracy's personal sentiments in regards to each situation she is placed in. Beginning in Act I, Tracy denotes her affluence and lukewarm approach through her costume alone. Although she dons a costume similar to the one worn by Hepburn in Cukor's film, her taupe jodhpurs and olive riding jacket lacks the femininity observed in the pantsuit worn by Hepburn in the cinematic version. Conversely, the costume in Friedman's play allows audiences to gain a more solid understanding of Tracy's specific characteristics. With fresh game slung limply over her shoulder as a clever prop, the costume is not only visually striking in juxtaposition to her feminine form, but it additionally delivers a stronger image indicating Tracy's prosperity, apathetic nature and independence of gender norms. The costume functions as an implicit indicator of imperative themes rather than simply being used as visual appeal for a prominent actress wearing the design.

Another example of Friedman better executing the use of costumes is apparent in Tracy's costume at the beginning of Act II, scene one, during the awaited nuptial celebration. Fuelled with a mixture of jazz and alcohol, the costume Tracy wears for the duration of the scene not

only reflects her intoxication while functioning as visual appeal for the choreography, but also acts as a means of visually symbolizing her feelings of indecision and turmoil. The costume is a ruby gown with features similar to Susannah Clapp's observations in her aforementioned review, including an edgy, low-cut bodice and several billowing layers of fabric comprising the underskirt of the gown. The design of the costume has multiple functions; primarily, it allows for an emphasis on movement and visual appeal as Tracy "misbehaves" alongside the cast, her costume acting as prop that highlights her synchronized stunts along with the overlaying orchestra. Additionally, the vibrant scarlet hue of her dress suggests her concealed passion. The color red is used to symbolize her desire to be loved and cherished as a woman with mistakes rather than revered as an unapproachable goddess. Such observation is imperative to note, for it foils the fabricated persona she emphasizes in prior scenes through an array of conservative ivory dresses – a color denoting purity, modesty and often associated with divinity. Tracy's true self is revealed through her intoxication, which in turn is implicitly suggested through her change of wardrobe. Juxtaposed with Cukor's modest, ivory gown employed during the same scene, one is able to perceive how Friedman's adaptation delivered a more successful impact that allows audiences to better comprehend both the narrative and Tracy's complexity.

The costumes in Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* are relevant upon viewing; however, their purpose is diminished as soon as the narrative of the film concludes. Conversely, *High Society*'s utilization of costumes – including the varying functions of supporting the ambience and the inclusion of audience participation – supports a memorable experience, one that is distinguishable from other adaptations and has a more lasting impact. However, the method in which a costume is employed, specifically its ability to function diversely, is not the only aspect to impact the conclusive perception of a play or film. As previously stated, there are several

rudiments that function conjunctively in order to execute the director's "statement," namely the artistic vision that supports the narrative (Campbell 21). For instance, an example supplementing such notion is apparent when recalling how a costume can function to further visual appeal through its mobility – an aspect that subsequently develops from the incorporation of sound and choreography as collective support.

### **The Role of Music and Choreography**

The utilization of sound, explicitly how it functions with supportive choreography to construct the artistic design of a musical, is an additional component to address when contrasting Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* and Friedman's *High Society*. Unlike the preceding film and Philip Barry's original text that both reject an emphasis on music in favor of reinforcing dialogue, Friedman's production is a lively musical, one that transcends prior adaptations – including Charles Walters' 1956 film (and musical) adaptation of *High Society* – with a performance that is lavish, buoyant and thriving with a memorable mixture of jazz and rock-infused Cole Porter hits.

Although one generally differentiates musicals from narrative-driven performances as incomparable art forms with distinct criteria, the incorporation of music and the decisive exclusion of such are important aspects to analyse due to their contrasting effects on an audience's perception of a performance. Peter Mudford asserts the importance of music as a pertinent component of a performance's success, proclaiming that regardless of how musicals are often criticized and cast aside as "mere [forms of] popular entertainment," the performances are nonetheless significant art forms shaped by the incorporation of music, exploring imperative concepts while also captivating and absorbing the audience into the fabricated diegesis of a performance with audible and metaphorical rhythms. Irrespective of classification – whether a

production is categorized as a musical or as traditional drama – the element of sound is discernible in both plays and films regardless of if it functions as music or is figuratively heard through the active rhythm of the choreographed action on stage (167-168). Comparable to the other fundamentals that amalgamate the aesthetic design of any production, music within a performance has a variety of adaptable functions that amalgamate as a whole to assist in actualizing the narrative. Sound – both diegetic and non-diegetic – primarily functions as additional support for realism, accentuating the existing visual and sensory rudiments in their purpose of solidifying the director's vision. Not only is it needed support in actualizing the performance's diegesis and overall ambience, but it also operates explicitly as a definitive transition between scenes as well as implicitly as a method of emphasizing characters' sentiments towards specific situations.

George Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* is not categorized as a musical; however, the element of sound is still a pertinent aspect used in the film, specifically employed as support for realism while also functioning as a definitive indicator for transitions between scenes that skilfully overlap and unify areas vacant of dialogue or action within the narrative. The applied music is always subsequent to the narrative; it is unobtrusive, accentuating the ambience of select sequences rather than acting as an active component of entertainment separately from the narrative. A principal example denoting its subservient position is observable in the sequence featuring the awaited admissions of the undisclosed desires between an inebriated Tracy Lord and charismatic Mike Connor in Act II. Sound is subtly integrated into the scene in the classic Hollywood fashion; the music, gentle and seemingly seductive, gradually develops as ambient noise to fill the figurative space that surrounds each character. As the scene progresses, the music employed mimics the choreography onscreen; the volume gradually intensifies as Tracy artfully

eludes Mike's tiddly attempts of consoling her. Only when the action peaks – explicitly, the moment in which Mike seizes Tracy in an expected kiss – does the music burst from its restraints and parallel the volume of the narrative before ceasing altogether once more. One is correct in asserting that the music applied to the prior scene can be interpreted as briefly dynamic; however, the rhythm remains subservient in comparison to volume of the dialogue, principally establishing the romantic ambience instead of operating independently as another form of entertainment.

Because there is an understandable dearth of musical influence in Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story*, juxtaposing Charles Walters' 1956 adaptation *High Society* with Maria Friedman's contemporary production of the same title is conceivably a better example that allows for one to distinguish the differing effects of music in cinema and theatre. Prior to comparing each performance's use of sound and music as aspects to reinforce the narrative, however, one must first comprehend the musical guidance of Cole Porter, the celebrated American composer whose melodies are derived from his personal understanding of an elitist lifestyle and are seamlessly implemented into the narratives of both Walters' and Friedman's productions in order to fabricate a more entertaining, exemplary experience. Porter was illustrious for being impeccably matched with the narrative of Philip Barry's original *The Philadelphia Story*; his contributed expertise as a composer in transforming the original narrative into an exceptional musical – precisely, his inclusion of “aching ballads” and “voluminous patter songs” (Maslon 16-17) as astute alternatives for dialogue – efficaciously portrays his idiosyncratic affluence while also adequately bringing forth the underlying subject of escapism in the storyline. The devised tunes also reflect the dynamics of the characters; respective sets of peculiarities and principles belonging to each character are melodically narrated through specific

songs, some of which include the satirical number “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” as a portrayal of Liz and Mike’s censorious contempt towards the upper-crust of society, the ballad “True Love” that addresses the complex nostalgia between Dexter and Tracy, and the seductive tune “Let’s Misbehave” that denotes the effects of a party comprised of jazz and alcohol on the bride-to-be and her plethora of staff. Instead of detracting from the importance of the narrative, Porter’s songs function collectively as supplementary emphasis on the particular nuances of the narrative, creatively depicting imperative aspects that are subtly implied while also impacting audiences in an indelible style.

If one were to recapitulate the narrative of Philip Barry’s *The Philadelphia Story*, the emphasis on escapism would undoubtedly be cited as a significant aspect; thus, Porter’s inclusion of music does not detract from the narrative. The included music accentuates the existing principles of the original production while epitomizing Barry’s true intent on how the narrative should be perceived. Walters’ execution of *High Society* capitalizes on such aspects. Comparable to Cukor’s film, the music within Walters’ adaptation is used to reinforce realism, exaggerating specific props while also accentuating the ambience of varying scenes. In contrast of the former, the primary function of Porter’s songs in Walters’ adaptation is to act as a separate form of entertainment rather than functioning as a subservient component. The songs are scripted to add a fantastical element that consequently strengthens the escapist perception, one that contrasts the monotonous realities of those without superfluous wealth. It is no surprise that Walters chose to achieve such experience by hiring an affluent cast comprised of actors that can accomplish his desired perspective with little uncertainty; the celebrated flair of aristocratic Grace Kelly as Tracy Lord combined with the talent of legendary vocalists Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, performing as Mike and Dexter respectively, leaves little room for one to doubt the

production to be an entertaining experience – especially in regards to the aspect of music. Each eminent actor, together with the talent of the pivotal jazz musician Louis Armstrong as additional support for comic relief in the form of music, efficaciously performs their respective roles while also reinforcing escapism through their individual statuses. However, it is also disputable that the glamour of Walters' *High Society* is diminished *because* of the prominent statuses of each actor – explicitly, the comprehension of the narrative and the significance of the escapist function within the film are weakened in comparison to other adaptations, specifically Friedman's, due to the film's emphasis on glamorizing the celebrities instead of the actual storyline.

Because the prior claim is subjective, one might assume that Walters' 1956 musical is seemingly flawless upon considering the enormous talent displayed onscreen in addition to the talent incorporated into the narrative by Porter himself. Furthermore, one might ponder how Friedman's adaptation can effectively achieve a more poignant and entertaining impact in a manner that does not discredit either prior film. The success of the Old Vic's production of *High Society* – specifically the achievement attributed to Nathan Wright's mesmerizing choreography and musical director Theo Jamieson's superior control of the performance's musical ensemble – is accredited once more to the astute incorporation of the audience along with the creative decision to modernize Porter's songs as a method of appeal for all audiences. Utilizing the component of live music from an onstage orchestra allows for a more entertaining, creative means of highlighting the character's emotions in comparison to that of simple dialogue. Moreover, the essence of music and the actors' abilities to sing in the play reaffirm the surreal, escapist subject matter that forms an underlying connection between all varying adaptations. Arthur Kopit elaborates on such claim by asserting that “[characters] sing when what they really need to say is...impossible to say,” perhaps due to fear or dialogue being an insufficient method

of conveying their true emotions (*High Society* 19). In other words, music – whether orchestra, vocals, or sound effects accentuating the stage and props – is an unconscious language that universally forms an intimate connection with audiences; thus, the creative liberties of music allow for a more profound effect on spectators in terms of how the narrative is delivered from actor to onlooker.

A primary example depicting the advantages of renewing Porter's songs and constructive integration of the audience is discernible in the opening sequence of Act II. In contrast to Cukor's film and Walters' cinematic musical, the second half of Friedman's adaptation begins in medias res with Kate Fleetwood stumbling towards center stage as an inebriated Tracy Lord while triumphantly declaring her desire to misbehave. The sequence jovially transmutes on cue, spiralling into an exuberant dance routine while the cast erupts into Porter's "Let's Misbehave" and the stage transforms accordingly. Theatre critic Edward Seckerson describes the sequence as one that efficaciously portrays the crucial, but humorous collapse of sophistication; the Lords' precious "high society disintegrates" into a "lowdown" featuring an unforgettable duet of "virtuosic pianistic pizzazz between Joe Stilgoe and music director Theo Jamieson" with unrivalled choreography that stimulates all occupants of the theatre (2015). The audience relishes the dynamic energy of the sequence and is even invited to interact with the cast members performing. They are encouraged to whistle, clap or jovially tap out rhythms in their seats surrounding the in-the-round stage. The music and diegetic sounds employed within the sequence assist in establishing such claim; the amalgamated impact derived from the energy of the live orchestra, musicians and vocals provided by the cast members themselves transcend the lacklustre portrayals of the equivalent sequences in George Cukor and Charles Walters' adaptations. Friedman's execution derives its success from "infusing [Porter's] songs with added



seduction,” precisely the amalgamation of contemporary elements derived from eras with memorable swing and rock-n-roll influences (*High Society* 15) as well as incorporated nuances of specific characters themselves. Although one may argue that altering the iconic tunes detracts from the narrative and instead merely underscores the sequence as pure entertainment, the opposite is suggested; specifically, the supplementary elements function as essential support for the narrative instead of functioning subserviently. Building upon Seckerson’s statement, the charismatic routine reflects the desires of the characters while mirroring the notion of intoxication – a pertinent reoccurring subject to the overall narrative. Moreover, the zealous display creates a performance that is distinct in comparison to previous adaptations. One might compare Friedman’s opening act to Walters’ incorporation of Armstrong and Crosby’s duet “Now You Has Jazz”; however, the former is deficient of the dynamic components discussed in Friedman’s impassioned routine as well as lacks the elements that directly affect the perceptions of all audiences.

The differing elements of implemented music in the discussed adaptations are also discernible upon analysing the sequence during Act I, scene two where the characters Tracy Lord and Dexter Haven perform the duet “True Love.” In Walters’ 1956 cinematic musical, the duet – performed by Kelley and Crosby – functions as method of audibly conveying the complex history between Tracy and Dexter, specifically contrasting their current displeasure for one another with a sequence featuring the opposite. Spectators perceive such history in the form of a flashback; sailing together on the tangible True Love the night of their honeymoon, Dexter and Tracy’s relationship is suggested as one comprised of everlasting passion. All of the sounds employed within the sequence reaffirm the utopian ambience and are considered non-diegetic, perhaps even including the vocals for Kelley’s and Crosby’s duet; however, such technicality

does not detract from the overall experience, nor does it diminish the purpose of each incorporated component. The employed music also establishes a reminiscent tone for the sequence, one that is nostalgic and bittersweet. Even though the music's primary function as support for accentuating the nostalgic ambience is significant in comprehending the design of the sequence, nonetheless the function can be perceived as subservient. Moreover, the purpose of the song can be perceived as showcasing the talent of the performing celebrities rather than supporting the narrative – a fact that is applicable to other implemented songs, including Crosby and Sinatra's bantering duet "Well, Did You Evah?" and Armstrong's "Now You Has Jazz" (Holden 1998).

On the contrary, Friedman's execution of the equivalent sequence emphasizes a dissimilar perception, one that reinforces the narrative and adeptly incorporates the audience. An immediate contrast between Friedman's execution and Walters' is evident in noting how the imported sounds of Friedman's performance are diegetic. More specifically, the music – including sound effects, the instrumental track from the orchestra and the actors' vocals – are performed live, delivering an experience that is only achievable in theatre. The concept of onstage music is imperative; a dissimilar sense of realism is established that foils the realism fabricated in the diegesis of cinema, one that derives itself from the intimate connection formed between an actor of theatre and their respective audience. The intensifying energy established through live music allows a spectator to become fully immersed within the play's diegesis, envisioning and feeling the swelling emotion of the sequence rather than simply viewing a flat screen devoid of such.

In addition to the use of diegetic sounds to support realism, another contrast between Walters' and Friedman's performances is evident in examining the intended perception of the

sequence. Dissimilar to Walters' cinematic musical, Kate Fleetwood and Rupert Young – the respective actors portraying Tracy Lord and Dexter Haven in Friedman's production – execute the duet "True Love" in a manner that emphasizes the narrative rather than the actors themselves, explicitly highlighting Tracy's complexity while also implicitly symbolizing Dexter's undisclosed sentiments. The sequence is staged in order for one to interpret how both characters are delivering monologues in the form of a melody; Porter's song "True Love" denotes a narrative of its own, describing the complex but passionate love shared between Tracy and Dexter despite their current dilemma and displeasure. As Tracy reminisces on the edge of a projected pool, Dexter joins supporting musicians in the balcony adjacent to the audience – their vocals merging and projecting across the expanse of the theatre while paralleling the orchestra's instruments.

The combined staging and utilization of music creates an exceptional experience that is memorable and successfully impacts the multiple senses of spectators observing the production. Deprived of such aesthetics, the narrative becomes bland and monotonous; the excitement emphasized in Barry's escapist plot is detracted from the experience and makes it more difficult for audiences to form interpersonal connections with the characters and conveyed themes. Friedman's incorporation of Porter's music, along with the superb choreography, visually and audibly inundates spectators with the sentiments of the characters and their conveyed emotions towards the themes affecting them. In addition, the incorporated music functions as an independent aesthetic in the sequence and can be interpreted as an additional form of entertainment that supports the narrative. Unlike Walters' and Cukor's components stressing the actors' talents, Friedman's *High Society* transcends the prior experiences by conveying the importance of the sequence in a method that creates a distinct experience dissimilar of preceding

adaptations. Moreover, the amalgamated musical components function as artistic transporters that integrate spectators into the crafted diegesis of the narrative while accentuating the pictorial fundamentals created by the stage, theatre and portrayal of the actors.

### **The Role of the Stage, the Theatre and the Audience**

Although the set is often undermined due to the overall emphasis on the narrative elements within a play or film, the set is vital in visually fabricating the desired interpretation of the text that is being adapted. Not only is the set design important for depicting the visual elements that cohesively solidify realism, but it also serves as the initial attraction for audiences as they formulate their preliminary interpretations. A significant portion of a play or film's success lies in its set design, specifically how well the director and designer's visions merge. The scenery grasps the audience's attention; the performance synthesizes "visual and audible poetry capable of arousing intuitions beyond the normal reach of an audience" (Mudford 109) by visually enrapturing them with specific details that are meant to convey time, location and space. Additionally, the former elements serve as a visual emphasis on the overall subject of a play and film; the combined components are methodically utilized in order to reinforce, either overtly or subtly, what the dialogue conspicuously expresses. Drew Campbell further explains how the importance of a set lies not in the notion of creating a "visually impressive" display (Campbell 22), but rather the creation of one that encompasses the following: an appealing set that expresses the context of the plot implicitly, the described location and time period of the text explicitly, and the incorporation of unique nuances that will specifically differentiate it from other versions.

The original design for Philip Barry's text desired to encompass all of the previous aspects, seeking to encapsulate the ambience permeating from the "grandiose estates" built on

the Philadelphia Main Line (Montieth 22). While other playwrights and authors emphasized their disdain for the socialite behavior of debutantes strung along the “old money” suburbs and Pennsylvania Railroad in their published works, Barry embraced the culture by choosing to both earnestly and satirically portray the “champagne-fueled” society through a setting depicting such aspects (26). Although the entirety of the play has a two-set design with few changes between scenes, the stage description for Act I (which also serves as the setting for Act III) implies the previous niceties and describes the sitting room as a location etched with luxuries of the past:

The sitting room of the Lords’ house in the country near Philadelphia is a large, comfortably furnished room of a somewhat faded elegance containing a number of very good Victorian pieces. [...] The entrance to what the family still calls “the parlor” is through the double doors downstage Right 1. [...] A wall cabinet Right of the fireplace contains a quantity of bric-a-brac and there is more of it, together with a number of signed photographs in silver frames, upon the tables and piano. (Barry I.1.9)

Much of the play takes place in the aforementioned sitting room, including scenes such as the introduction, which establishes both the setting and initial glimpse of Tracy Lord’s cold demeanor, and the closing scene of the anticipated wedding in Act III. The Lords’ parlor – a term used lightly, as it is meant to suggest the Lords’ status rather than the actual identified space – is also decorated with “marble” emblems that signify the family’s wealth as a means to stress Barry’s desired ambience (9). From the diction employed, one is able to clearly perceive how Barry not only emphasizes the escapist notion previously touched upon in Chapter I, but also adds depth to his description by insinuating how the Lords’ wealth and status are asserted through their accumulation of expensive antiquities.

Cukor's set from the cinematic version of *The Philadelphia Story* functions similarly, significantly borrowing its design from Barry's text; however, because cinema has a stark advantage in fabricating the reality of all scenes, Cukor's design for the cinematic scenery – despite selecting a “slightly less sumptuous setting” (Montieth 25) than the grandiose design Barry pictured – allows for a greater emphasis on the wealthy society that the audience is meant to perceive when viewing the film. The scene equivalent to Barry's introduction begins with an establishing shot as a means of introducing the setting; lush foliage frames the audience's view of the mansion, creating the illusion of grandeur while also suggesting a sense of privacy infringed upon by the viewers. The scene fades into another long shot featuring Dinah, the youngest Lord, who acts as a visual guide as she searches for her elder sister. The camera slowly tracks after her, highlighting various elegant trinkets throughout the mansion as she unhurriedly pivots on her heel and searches throughout the foyer. Viewers are able to develop a sense of size and ambience as various marble pillars come into sight within the capacious entryway. As the scene progresses, a grand staircase is also shown adjacent to a lavishly decorated mantel with a plethora of well-appointed props lit with high key lighting to soften the entire scene. The former elements collectively accentuate the surreal ambience associated with such finery as well as reemphasize the impressive interior of the estate belonging to those who live comfortably as the wealthy elite of Philadelphia; thus, in comparison to the previously discussed setting described in Barry's text, Cukor's design visually actualizes Barry's ideas, establishing realism by filming on location at a Philadelphian estate that typifies the envisioned socialite lifestyle.

Cukor's advantage in actualizing Barry's set also lies in his ability to quickly edit scenes with different environments and perspectives. Sequences comprising the film are prerecorded and are able to be viewed indeterminately; thus, settings are able not only to vary between

different locations, but other locations can be integrated within the plot to better emphasize realism and the various underlying themes present. For instance, diverse locations that appear in Cukor's cinematic version are absent from Barry's text or Friedman's production. A primary example includes the scene immediately following the aforementioned introduction; the subsequent segment introduces Tracy's affluent fiancé at her family's stables, a location assumed to be quite far from her grand Philadelphian estate due to the incorporation of a car. Other examples include a brief scene depicting the Spy Magazine office and additional scenes depicting varying rooms within and around Tracy's mansion – including an impressive pool deck, a grand library, and a lush garden adjacent to the main house. The purpose of the freedom to include different scenes is to strengthen the elite status of the Lords; each location emphasizes the vastness of their lavish estate. Furthermore, the scenes are added to differentiate Cukor's version from other adaptations, as well as to allow for emphasis on the escapist theme by portraying different scenic environments that are lavish and upper-class.

One might question how Friedman's direction of the play allows for *High Society* to triumph the film representation. Live theatre has always remained in a "terminal state" when compared to film, threatened by the simplicity that follows the advantages of film. Because of film's freedom and ease at establishing a realistic diegesis, live performances are often expected to fall flat in comparison; after all, it requires less effort to be able to purchase a movie that is indefinitely viewable in the comfort of one's home where there is an absence of "implicit formality or communal participation" (Mudford 1). While the former notion is subjectively true, Friedman's success is evident through audience participation – a vital aspect that is exclusively unique to live theatre and emphasizes the imperative notion of space created through the established setting and stage itself. Peter Mudford reiterates the prior claim by stating that the

importance of communal participation in experiencing theatre as a thriving form of art. He equates the exclusivity of a live performance and the actors' engagement with the set to that of an artist traversing a high trapeze, stating that the audience "cannot [differentiate] whether the performance [they] are watching, which the previous night might have seemed a skillful impersonation, is going to touch greatness" (1). In other words, each performance is unique – an exclusive fingerprint or imprint that differs every night for the duration of the overall performance. The way in which the actors engage with the audience, props and set is an exclusive experience per night, "transient" and "ephemeral" while the same relationship between actors and the aforesaid components in film is not (2).

Prior to discussing the importance of audience participation, one must first comprehend how the staging of Friedman's adaptation significantly differentiates Friedman's performance from other variations of Philip Barry's *The Philadelphia Story*. Although Cukor's cinematic adaptation closely emphasizes the Lords' elitist lifestyle through their antique collection of luxuries and grand estate similarly to Barry's original description, the film lacks the creative liberties needed to reach all audiences. Friedman's production, on the other hand, transcends the former and establishes a connection with contemporary audiences by accentuating the family's wealth through the clever mixing of props representing antique and modern luxuries. The shift of focus does not discredit Barry's original text; instead, it affirms the escapist theme that controls the narrative and overall vision of the tale as well as broadens the idea that the Lords are considered to be "ahead of their time" (Pye, *High Society* 15). A few examples of the incorporated props include "replicas of Bauhaus furniture" and "Giacometti sculptures" that are carefully integrated into the setting along with other contemporary designs from today's pioneering European stylists (15). Tom Pye, chief designer of Friedman's *High Society*, clarifies



how Barry's intent for the original set was to suggest the Lords' affluence as a metaphorical representation of their "chic," yet prestigious style; thus the incorporation of modern luxuries better fabricates an entertaining diegesis that is suitable for all audiences, old and new, without simply repeating earlier designs that are considered lackluster for today's appeal – an unmistakable flaw in cinema's lack of flexibility that consequently detracts from Cukor's film. Although one might conclude that deviating in the design of the set undermines Barry's initial production, such deduction is incorrect. Friedman's primary setting of a grand, seven-hundred and fifty-acre Long Island estate modeled from the famous abode of dazzling, real-life socialite Helen Hope Montgomery Scott still emphasizes the escapist perception discussed in the first chapter while incorporating slight changes to accommodate newer generations. It is true that the Lords derive their status from a combination of their ancestry, estate and extravagant antiques; however, their prestige is also implied through their progressive mannerisms – a combination of women and men who honor tradition, but are open-minded nonetheless. Including contemporary props and aspects to the overall design strengthens their modish behavior and lifestyle without overshadowing the dialogue with unnecessary shifts in the overall setting.

The emphasis on incorporating *all* audiences is also projected in Friedman's staging. One might describe the design for *High Society*'s set as seemingly less naturalistic than that of its cinematic counterpart; however, it is this quality that serves as the play's most compelling feature – one that superiorly distinguishes Friedman's production from Cukor's, Barry's, and even Walters' preceding musical. The staging is complex and visually fascinating. Although its primary function is to serve as established scenery, it also functions secondarily as a prop to suggest the intended blue-blood ambience – an aspect highly praised and attributed to London's esteemed Old Vic theatre. Established in 1818, the Old Vic visually reflects the opulence that

preceding movie palaces and theatres portrayed during the golden era of cinema and Broadway productions. Additionally, the theatre has been internationally celebrated since its creation for its emphasis on the communal relationship between performers and their audience by actors and directors alike (*High Society* 13). Over the recent decades, the theatre has undergone creative renovations in accordance to what will better suit the varying performances in their selection; nevertheless, each change has been made with confidence in bettering the relationship between the performers, audience and “objects” in the “envelope of space” (Mudford 104) that *is* the theatre. The type of stage utilized in *High Society* is in-the-round. In other words, it is one that is circular and faces the audience on all sides. It includes several trapdoors beneath the initially flat surface that collectively transform the initially barren platform into a more creative design. Such design allows for a closer relationship between the audience and actors, a factor that subsequently affects the success of the play. Moreover, those who are affluent enough to pay a greater ticket price are able to purchase seats that are along the edge of the actual stage. While one may initially perceive such seating details as a minor component in the success of a production, the proximity of the seats is important nonetheless. Those privileged to sit in the bordering rows are treated as fellow actors by the cast members; they, like all of the audience, are guests of Tracy Lord’s nuptial revelry and are always considered in every blocked action and delivered line.

The technique and notion of including the audience as guests in the narrative is exclusively experienced in theatre and allows for a more profound impact on spectators. According to the official website for The Old Vic theatre detailing the performance, on two specific evenings – May 23rd, 2015 and June 13th, 2015 – during the period of time in which *High Society* was performed, spectators were encouraged to dress in their best attire, preferably

formalwear while attending the performance (2015). Participating audiences for those specific dates were treated to a delightful performance that not only included free champagne and live music prior to the opening act, but one that merged the increasingly thinning boundary between stage and audience. Such technique allows members of the audience to become actors themselves; they are welcomed guests – unconscious artists performing alongside the professionals onstage as fellow onlookers witnessing the Lords’ esteemed event. Likewise, they are fellow spies that spectate along with characters such as Mike and Liz, comparable commoners that are invited for a swell evening of champagne and live music. Because cinema lacks the intimate connection exclusive to theatre, Cukor’s film cannot achieve the same experience as that of Friedman’s play.

Such details are perceived at their greatest during the introduction of Act I and the beginning of Act II. The former begins similarly as Cukor’s and Barry’s versions do; however, instead of a pre-established set combining Barry’s interior design with details resembling that of Cukor’s private point-of-view, the audience is thrust immediately into action as Ellie Bamber, the actress portraying Dinah Lord, comes bustling down the aisle closest to the seating stalls while shouting for her sister over the volume from the spectators’ chatter. The stage, empty at this point, is then transformed into the grand interior of the Lords’ mansion through a series of events. Dinah steps offstage and engages with spectators as various jubilant servants musically rearrange the stage. The piano sinks back into its position in the floor as maids and butlers carry out various props, some of which are constructed onstage, that collectively reinforce the socialite ambience. Their movements are timed with the music from the orchestra, accentuating their every gesture and change that takes place on the stage with mounting energy that captivates spectators in a manner that is unique to theatre. The setting and the objects reinforcing the

dynamic energy become props in this instance, a tactic that not only appeals to the audiences with dynamic energy, but also as a means to include them as pseudo-actors.

The same tactics are employed during the introduction of Act II. As described by theatre critic Joseph Lloyd, the play, in addition to this specific scene, owes much of its success to its emphasis in the dynamic relationship between the theatre and the audience, specifically how Tom Pye utilizes the “in-the-round set-up...in keeping the audience at the center of the action” (2015). Lloyd further praises how the “delirious” opening act serves as a magnificent example of the creative correlation between stage, cast and audience with stunning visuals that inspire “howls of delight” (2015) and exceeds the former films. At the end of the intermission, the iconic piano returns to center stage; however, this time joined with a secondary set to accompany it. The stage is transformed accordingly; secondary cast members create various props onstage with an abundance of energy while the protagonists sprint down the stage aisles with champagne glasses in hand. Tracy and her numerous guests liven the atmosphere with unforgettable choreography that encompasses not only the stage, but also the entire theatre. Actors utilize the tiers of the auditorium as well as the aisles between seated rows in order to appeal to the audience’s senses on all sides; the excitement from the combined boisterous music, dancing and laughter pulsates in unforgettable wavelengths in and around the building itself. Furthermore, additional props are employed to solidify realism and affect the audience’s senses in a manner that film is unable to achieve. The prominent scent of lit cigarettes in the hands of jovial cast members blends with the rich trace of champagne that relaxes the auditorium air; the alluring aroma from such props actualizes the scene, surpassing film by not only engaging with one’s sight and hearing, but also with their taste and smell.

Unlike the reserved party portrayed in Cukor's film, Friedman's scene is fueled with music, dance and an overall unsurpassable experience that is only achieved in a playhouse. One may argue that Charles Walters' cinematic musical *High Society* rivals Friedman's staging; however, his adaptation also lacks the creative appeal utilized through Friedman's innovative staging that incorporates the audience. Serena Davies praises Friedman's scenic display in Act II as an unforgettable experience for spectators, noting that the "champagne hasn't just gone to the heads of the wedding guests, but the audience's too" (2015). Along with strengthening the dynamics of communal participation, the role of the stage, setting and objects employed to support the former can be utilized outside of their primary functions in order to better execute a scene. More specifically, the aforesaid components can be used as metaphorical props to emphasize the narrative of a sequence without their primary functions weakening. Peter Mudford notes how the former emphasis is a vital component of live performances that significantly differentiates them from film:

In a film, the camera moves with people in their relationships; the stage frames objects in space, only some of which are people, though none are empty of dramatic meaning.

Objects of the stage become the projection of feelings, and not simply, as often in the cinema, the landscape in which the action occurs. (103)

In other words, it is not uncommon for props used within cinema to weaken as the scene progresses in favor of more emphasis on the narrative, whereas with theatre the props employed retain their importance to the overall production aside from their primary function as reinforcing the setting. The prior concept can also be applied to the role of the setting and staging, for there are instances in a film or play where the role of the setting can ultimately affect the outcome of a scene. A principal example is perceivable when juxtaposing Cukor's and Friedman's depictions

of the crucial sequence on “human frailty” between Tracy Lord and Dexter Haven in Act II, scene one. The established setting for this sequence in Barry’s original text is described as follows:

The porch, which is more like a room than a porch. Entrance from the sitting room at back Right Center and Left Center to the library, through glass doors at stage Left; to garden, down broad stone steps from porch and along gravel path past shrubbery to Left and Right. Open side of porch shielded [...] Flower stands Right and Left on porch...

(Barry II.1.46)

Barry’s description is vivid, painting a lovely image of the decorated outside to an estate that is fit for a revered goddess and her family to reside in. The diction employed, such as “shrubbery” and “glass,” combined with the detailed directions suggests the elegance that radiates from such imagery, perhaps even symbolizing the fragility and goddess-like perception that spectators are intended to have about Tracy Lord. Although realism is preferred by the audience, success is often achieved through “symbolic force,” rather than a “cluttered stage...with too many perspectives” that consequently detract from “imaginative concentration” (Mudford 104). Both Cukor and Friedman borrow from this ideology when adapting Barry’s former imagery; however, while the first transforms the text in favor of a more naturalistic, literal adaptation, the latter chooses an emblematic approach by superiorly utilizing the supporting components – the stage, lighting, and the audience – and ultimately better executes the scene.

Exteriorly, one can easily perceive how Cukor favors the cinematic advantage of combining close-up shots and medium shots in order to put more emphasis on the dialogue and facial expressions of each character. He stages the sequence in a setting reflecting *some* of Barry’s aesthetic choices; however, the impressive imagery of a porch framed in flourishing

foliage is reduced to mere scenery – thus the impact is lost. The scene is established with Tracy preparing to dive into her grand swimming pool before she is stopped by Dexter. The backdrop consists of dressing rooms that are out of focus due to the use of telephoto lens to emphasize the heated argument between Tracy and Dexter. Cukor's design *is* appropriate for the scene; however, it does little to reinforce the mounting energy that is suggested through the staccato-like retorts between the two characters. Furthermore, there is a dearth of connection between the spectators and the scene itself – a stark contrast to Friedman's production. The explicit purpose of the scene is not only for audiences to be able to better perceive the escapist theme, but also to allow for better emphasis on Tracy's inner anguish. Dexter berates Tracy and likens her to a goddess – a snide comparison meant to evoke anger from her and subsequently the audience. Spectators are invited to feel a spectrum of emotions – anger, sadness and even unspoken satisfaction upon viewing the scene; however, the established “space” between the viewer and the characters' raw vulnerabilities is vast and empty. Because of the film's restrictive flat screen, there is no true connection, save for the brief vision of what we – the audience – should feel. Aside from the lack of communal response or the function of the set, Tracy and Dexter are not particularly animate during this scene, contrary to their dialogue. Both characters stand within a few feet of each other while angrily bickering with their movements restricted and rigid before George Kitteridge enters from the right of the frame and interrupts their quarrel. Cukor's choices are successful for the film alone, but in comparison to Friedman's more energetic and creative portrayal it ultimately falls flat and is seemingly lackluster. The lack of movement, audience participation and emphasis on the scenery diminishes the importance of the scene; thus, Friedman's superior portrayal is affirmed.

In *High Society*, Friedman manipulates the stage in order to condense scenic details without weakening their purpose. Similar to Cukor's, the scene begins with Tracy preparing to swim when Dexter enters and presents her with his nuptial gift. The in-the-round stage is bare, save for a few plastic chairs, the changing rooms that are constructed as movable props and the "true love" miniature sailboat set aside by Dexter. The most striking feature is the projected pool. Using a colored panel filtered through a patterned gobo, blue light is projected onto a majority of the barren stage to mimic the texture of water in motion. The pattern is initially restricted to center stage during the argument between Tracy and Dexter; however, as Dexter delivers his lines more assertively and corners Tracy physically and metaphorically, the somber lighting begins to bleed into the overall scene. Such technique has a multitude of functions that are superiorly different from Cukor's portrayal of the same scene. The lighting functions primarily as part of the set, creating a unique rendering of a pool without the use of water on the actual stage. Aside from being utilized as an aesthetic visual, however, the light also functions as a means to suggest an overall mood that has the potential to dictate the desired reaction from the audience. Shades of blue are often associated with somberness, as well as sadness, regret or lingering and silent sentiments; thus, as the cerulean waves overlap Tracy at the end of the scene, such technique emphasizes her sensation of "drowning" in the harsh truth that was said through the dialogue while also functioning as a means to evoke sadness from the audience.

Because the stage is fashioned as one that readily permits audience interaction, Friedman manipulates the spatial range of the stage as a prop to both appeal and connect with spectators. The aforementioned projection of the pool is explicitly fascinating when considering the creative mechanics behind the design as well as when considering the purpose of metaphorically portraying Tracy's anguish; however, its function as a prop transcends its initial function as



simply serving as support in design. The projection has the clever illusion of being interactive, an aspect perceivable as Tracy kneels to sweep her hand across the fabricated water to allow the miniature True Love to set sail. As she touches the projected water, ripples form and sweep across the expanse of the stage with a broad range that encompasses the floor beneath the feet of those privileged in being seated in the foremost stalls. The prior method establishes realism without being overtly plain or literal like in Cukor's version; the embolic approach is aesthetically appealing to spectators without detracting from the overall scene as well as being successful in establishing the escapist imagery that Barry implied in the original text. The technique also cleverly incorporates the audience in a method that the preceding films are unable to do so. As Dexter somberly steps off stage to leave Tracy behind, he slowly exits via the main aisle of the theatre, stopping once to turn towards center stage while forlorn Tracy Lord holds his steady gaze. He is dimly lit, standing within the grey limbo created by the darkness of the auditorium and light softly penetrating from the stage. Dexter pivots, nodding to a few spectators before completely exiting as the cue for the duet "True Love" begins. The blocking for this moment transcends Cukor's by integrating the audience in a manner that reinforces the solemnity of the narrative while also casting them as actors themselves. Spectators are thrust into the drama that festers between Dexter and Tracy, empathizing with the latter and feeling the sobriety that emits from his actor after having witnessed such an intimate moment between the two. More specifically, their hushed silence metaphorically embodies the imperative notion of invaded privacy that both Barry and Cukor also desire to explore in their adaptations; however, unlike the former depictions, it is Friedman's portrayal that is an unforgettable experience leaving audiences reflecting upon their own frailties.

Consequently, the visual and cinematographic components comprising Cukor's adaptation do not culminate into the same experience that one will undoubtedly come to have upon viewing Friedman's theatric production. Both the desired ambience and dynamism derived from the imperative fundamentals are lost through the absence of chemistry between the performers and viewers that are an inherent part of cinema. Both film and theatre are dependent upon the reaction from their intended audiences and fundamental components that comprise them; therefore, the success of Friedman's unrivaled respect and consideration for the role of the audience in *High Society* is evident in creating an unparalleled experience that triumphs Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story*. The overall livelihood and function of The Old Vic itself resonates with spectators and exemplifies the prestigious ambience that was established in the preceding opulent theatres of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the collective visual and technical components – including costuming, music, the overall set design and choice of utilizing in-the-round stage – one is able to clearly perceive how the former rudiments efficaciously embody the escapist notion that is suggested through Barry's initial conception while also executing the narrative in a more stylistic, contemporary and memorable method.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The dissimilar impacts of cinema and theatre have become evident through the juxtaposition of George Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* and Maria Friedman's *High Society*. Having explored the contrasting constituents that amalgamate each performance, the triumph of drama is emphasized in regards to the inexhaustible debate between movie and play; explicitly, the differing methods in which both adaptations deliver the symptomatic content comprising their narratives in addition to the employed aesthetic rudiments guiding the interpretations of their respective audiences reaffirm the importance of traditional theatre as a incessantly thriving

art form disputably overshadowed by its comparable successor. Friedman's effective execution of a unique and memorable performance that actualizes the major aspects derived from Philip Barry's original text is accredited to the innovative dynamics that are exclusive to theatre, those of which effectively fabricate an artistic experience unachievable in cinema. Whereas film establishes realism by utilizing the convenience of adjustable, seamless shots that revise actors' talents until a point of perfection is reached, traditional drama equally achieves the same objective by doing so in a manner that directly impacts spectators with its inimitable ability of performer-spectator intimacy and the genuineness of the performance. Every aspect of Friedman's production relies on such techniques; from the beguiling delivery of the narrative to the stylistic components that support the inherent themes, the imperative aspect of audience participation is meticulously applied in order to viscerally impact spectators with a compelling, interpersonal experience underpinning the overwhelming thrill and talent of live theatre.

One should not discredit the skill involved in producing films, nor should one disrepute the success of Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story* as an enjoyable, timeless classic. Instead, one should view the academic discussion juxtaposing cinema and theatre as a method of reaffirming the significance of the performing arts as a whole. The continuing evolution of technology and media in American culture allows possibility for growth in both analogous studies despite the lack of societal influence marketing the success of live theatre. Maria Friedman's *High Society* is one of numerous performances that augments support for an art form thriving in the shadows of a technological society influenced by the convenience and crafted illusion of a two-dimensional screen. Taking everything into account, perhaps one will now come to better comprehend the significance and necessity of traditional theatre, choosing to reinforce the necessity of interpersonal arts in generations to come.

## VII. WORKS CITED

- Barry, Philip. *The Philadelphia Story*. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 2010. Print.
- Baisden, Gregory Scott, Ph.D. "The Philadelphia Story: An Olympian Comedy of Manners." *The Global Question*. Pathwork Press (2014): 1-12. 24 Dec. 2014. Web. 10 Mar. 2016.
- Bentley, Eric. "Realism and the Cinema." *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*. Ed. Robert Knopf. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. 103-09. Print.
- Billington, Michael. "High Society Review: Misbehaving Musical Is a Snob's Party." Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 14 May 2015: n. pag. Web. 6 Sept. 2015.
- Bordwell, David. "Three Dimensions of Film Narrative." *Poetics of Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2007. 1-56. Print.
- Campbell, Drew. *Technical Theater for Nontechnical People*. 2nd ed. New York: Skyhorse, 2004. *EBSCOhost eBooks*. Web. 5 Dec. 2015.
- Cardullo, Bert. *The Ghost of Cinema Past: Contemporary Reflections on Classic Film Art*. Cambridge Scholars, 2009: 29-47. *EBSCOhost eBooks*. Web. 12 Dec. 2015.
- Clapp, Susannah. "High Society Review – Sumptuous Frocks, but is it really top class?" Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 17 May 2015: n. pag. Web. 20 Jan. 2016.
- Collins, Stephen. "Review: High Society, Old Vic Theatre." Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *British Theatre*. London, UK, 14 May 2015: n. pag. 2015. Web. 6 Sept. 2015.

- Davies, Serena. "High Society, Old Vic, Review: What A Swell Party - Eventually." Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, London, UK, 15 May 2015: n. pag. Web. 6 Sept. 2015.
- Eldridge, David. *American Culture in the 1930s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008. Print.
- Fisher, Robert. "Film Censorship and Progressive Reform." *Journal of Popular Film* 4.2 (1975): 143-56. 14 Apr. 2013. Web. 15 Jan. 2016.
- High Society*. Dir. Charles Walters. Perf. Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra. Turner Entertainment Co., 1956. DVD.
- High Society*. By Arthur Kopit. Dir. Maria Friedman. Perf. Kate Fleetwood and Rupert Young. The Old Vic Theatre, London, UK. 20 May 2015. Performance.
- "High Society - The Old Vic." *The Old Vic*. The Old Vic Theatre Trust, 2015. Web. 20 Jan. 2016.
- Holden, Stephen. "THEATER; Well, Did You Evah! Back to 'High Society'" Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Christopher Renshaw. *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 1 Feb. 1998: n. pag. Web. 15 Mar. 2016.
- Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd. "The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama." The Open University: Royal Charter, 2001: 1-14. *Academia.edu*. Web. 20 Jan. 2016.
- Kauffmann, Stanley. "Notes on Theatre and Film." *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*. Ed. Robert Knopf. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. 152-54. Print.
- Kopit, Arthur. *High Society* by Arthur Kopit. Dir. Maria Friedman. The Old Vic Theatre Company Programme. London: The Cut, May-June 2015. 1-33. Print.

Lloyd, Joseph. "Theatre review: High Society Marks End of Kevin Spacey's Old Vic Reign."

Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *City A.M.* City A.M. Limited, 22 May 2015: n. pag. Web. 15 Mar. 2016.

Maslon, Lawrence. *High Society* by Arthur Kopit. Dir. Maria Friedman. The Old Vic Theatre Company Programme. London: The Cut, May-June 2015. 1-33. Print.

Montieth, Sharon. *High Society* by Arthur Kopit. Dir. Maria Friedman. The Old Vic Theatre Company Programme. London: The Cut, May-June 2015. 1-33. Print.

Mudford, Peter. *Making Theatre: From Text to Performance*. London: The Athlone Press, 2000. *EBSCOhost eBooks*. Web. 17 Sept. 2015.

Pye, Tom. *High Society* by Arthur Kopit. Dir. Maria Friedman. The Old Vic Theatre Company Programme. London: The Cut, May-June 2015. 1-33. Print.

Sekerson, Edward. "High Society, Old Vic Theatre: Cole Porter Film-Turned-Stage-Musical Semi-Fizzes in Latest Revival." Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *The Arts Desk*, 15 May 2015: n. pag. Web. 26 Mar. 2016.

Schlater, Angela. *Flaming Youth: Gender in the 1920s Hollywood*. Diss. Loyola University, 2008. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2008. *ProQuest*. Web. 17 Sept. 2015

Shoard, Catherine. "The Unusual Sex Life of a Screen Goddess." *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 26 Nov. 2006: n. pag. Web. 15 Mar. 2016.

*The Philadelphia Story*. Dir. George Cukor. Perf. Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn and James Stewart. 1940. DVD.

"Thomas Babington Macaulay, His Life, Writings, and Connections with India." *Thomas Babington Macaulay, His Life, Writings, and Connections with India*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2016.

Tuite, Rebecca C. *High Society* by Arthur Kopit. Dir. Maria Friedman. The Old Vic Theatre Company Programme. London: The Cut, May-June 2015. 1-33. Print.

Williams, Holly. "High Society, Old Vic, Review: An Effervescent Musical." Rev. of *High Society*, Dir. Maria Friedman. *The Independent*. Independent Digital News and Media, 15 May 2015: n. pag. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.