

***Set to Music*: Noël Coward Adapts *Words and Music* for Broadway**

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# **Introduction**

**The Concept of Revue**

The concept of the revue form is one which has largely been forgotten about and only in more recent years has scholarly discussion begun to evolve and develop. Jonas Westover’s *A study and reconstruction of ‘The Passing Show of 1914’: The American musical revue and its development in the early twentieth century* is one example of scholarship which uses analysis of specific shows to support his commentary on the subject. As Westover points out, Gerald Bordman in his anthology, *American Musical Theater: A Chronicle[[1]](#footnote-1)*, “provides the most scholarly approach to the musical revue”[[2]](#footnote-2) but fails to do so from a show-by-show perspective, and so his comments are merely general statements and viewpoints rather than offering critical judgement.

There is little scholarly literature on musical theatre before the development of the “fully-integrated” or “book” musicals, perhaps because after Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* and the advent of television, revues have largely been consigned to history and the focus, instead, has shifted towards these later musicals. As this study is looking at two Noël Coward revues, with particular emphasis on the American revue *Set to Music*, it is important firstly to define a revue, and secondly to look briefly at the history of the form as this will, in turn, help us to understand Coward’s influences before *Words and Music* and the adaptation of this revue for Broadway.

Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson[[3]](#footnote-3) define a British revue as:

Originally called an “end of the year review”, it is a form of theatrical production which aims to show a succession of scenes in dialogue and song representing such incidents or individuals as have preoccupied the public to a greater or lesser extent during the course of the year…An English equivalent concisely defines Revue as “a term of French origin, used to describe a survey, mainly satiric, of contemporary events, with songs, sketches, burlesques, monologues and so on.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

They go further, arguing, “… the ingredients of revue, those of burlesque and satire – social, topical or political – have long been current coinage of British theatre.”[[5]](#footnote-5) An American revue, meanwhile, is defined by Westover, as:

…a form of musical theater that is given coherence by a central theme – such as a season, a single composer, or a topical reference – but that lacks a coherent narrative structure. It consists of a sequence of sketches but can also include solo acts and songs. Particularly in the period around the turn of the twentieth century, revue had links to other forms of popular theatre in the United States such as burlesque, musical comedy, minstrelsy, and variety or vaudeville, as well as to European forms of revue stages both in France and England. The genre relied, in part, on spectacular displays of women as singers, dancers and even as part of the sets, and it flourished in the United States in the early twentieth century and in Hollywood musical form in the 1930s. Its origins lay in the nineteenth century, drawing influences from music-theatrical forms such as spectacular, extravaganza and others that featured a fragmentary narrative that supported sketches and music, large numbers of women in ballets and choruses, and spectacular effects and scenery.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In short, revues amalgamated several theatrical traditions for entertainment. More often than not, they were usually linked to a specific period in time; references would be made to current affairs, global events or topical issues of the day.

It is *The Passing Show* (1894) which is considered to be the first successful revue, but it was not until Florenz Ziegfeld began his series of shows, which he titled *The Follies*, that the genre became mainstream on Broadway. Ziegfeld’s productions were known to be lavish extravaganzas and once *The Follies* became an annual event, the success of his shows meant some elements were subsequently used in other musical shows. Westover, in his journal article *The revue: The genre-bending, ever-shifting, spectacular entertainment that was (almost) forgotten*, notes the essential components:

…(in no particular order): music, dance, comedy, spectacle, elaborate costumes, the display of young women (chorus girls) and a bevy of young men to accompany them…Other pieces of the revue that were frequently present include: a celebrity or 2 to draw in the audiences, typical humour that lampooned either other performances of the season or political or culture trends of the day (and sometimes all of these), an extended ballet sequence, transformation scenes (a theatrical device where the scene ‘magically’ changes from one to another), and at least one type of unusual type of act (a female impersonator, a black comedian or acrobats, for example).[[7]](#footnote-7)

As the genre developed, the emphasis became more on wit than gesture and spectacle as it targeted sophisticated audiences. Ethan Mordden argues in *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s* that *The Little Show* (1929) was a starting point for this new approach, as it “introduced a complete integration of talent, so that the speciality stylists were dropped in favour of versatile performers.”[[8]](#footnote-8) This versatility continued during the 1930s revues, which was the heyday for the likes of Beatrice Lillie, Bob Hope and Bobby Clark. According to Gerald Bordman, the decade was the one which also saw “the wildly extroverted jazz and florid romance of the ‘20s give way to both the subdued, introspective material and strident muckraking of the early ‘30s.”[[9]](#footnote-9) The latter is more applicable to the 1938-39 Broadway season.

To a certain extent, *Set to Music* seems out of place in a season which also featured *Hellzapoppin*, *The Streets of Paris* and *Scandals*. Mordden describes *Hellzapoppin* as “a ragamuffin vaudeville act that suggested a Marx Brothers version of burlesque”[[10]](#footnote-10) which was continually being rewritten to ensure that it remained topical. Sketches included clips of Hitler speaking in a Yiddish accent and Mussolini in blackface, whilst chorus girls left the stage to dance with members of the audience and sit in their laps.[[11]](#footnote-11) It was undeniably popular; running for 1404 performances, it was the longest running Broadway show before *Oklahoma!*. This new type of revue seemed to set a precedent: whilst *The Streets of Paris* ran for a more modest 274 performances and with an emphasis on comedy, Mordden suggests that the revue was in the *Hellzapoppin* style[[12]](#footnote-12) and as such, may have been these two shows which marked “an end to the sophisticated revue in favour of simple theme revues and Big Laugh variety shows”[[13]](#footnote-13) – most notably, George White’s[[14]](#footnote-14) *Scandals. Scandals* (1939-40), an alleged emulation of *Hellzapoppin*, is described by Mordden as containing “bathroom humour, scabrous double meaning and a use of vaudeville flotsam instead of entertainers worthy of the *Scandals* tradition.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

In the midst of this new style of revue, Coward’s *Set to Music* was in stark contrast to these three revues. At the start of the decade, his style was, whilst distinctive, arguably comparable in several aspects to the American revue style but by the 1938-39 season, this was no longer the case. Sketches such as ‘Three White Feathers’ which sees a girl describe her ascension up the social ladder, and ‘Weary of it All’ which highlights how money and fame does not always buy happiness, are not as sharply satirical as those seen in *Scandals* for example. But then this was not Noël Coward; his works always had an air of sophistication. In his article ‘Men and Ideas’, David Cannadine quotes Coward’s friend Cole Lesley, who summed up the reason why this was the case:

He belonged to a time when people and his fame placed him in that class of person – went automatically on arrival at their destination to sign the book at Government House or the British Embassy, and he delighted in the subsequent invitations, the luxury and the grandeur.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Writing “bathroom humour” or having chorus girls sitting on audience members’ laps would have been abhorrent to him; he was, after all, creating the image of the sophisticated, quintessential English gentleman and audiences would have known that his revues would not be like *Hellzapoppin* or *Scandals*. Coward’s musical revues were known on Broadway and so they were not completely overshadowed by these other revues. During the late twentieth century, British musicals became a Broadway staple but, as Mordden says, during the 1930s, the only British musicals that were known about in America were largely those by Noël Coward.[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Noël Coward and His Revues**

Noël Coward (1899-1973) was born in Teddington, London and made his professional stage debut at the age of eleven in the children’s play *The Goldfish.* Coward recalled the following in his memoirs *Present Indicative*:

One day…a little advertisement appeared in the *Daily Mirror*…It stated that a talented boy of attractive appearance was required by a Miss Lila Field to appear in her production of an all-children fairy play: *The Goldfish*. This seemed to dispose of all argument. I was a talented boy, God knows, and, when washed and smarmed down a bit, passably attractive. There appeared to be no earthly reason why Miss Lila Field shouldn’t jump at me, and we both [Coward and his mother] believed that she would be a fool indeed to miss such a magnificent opportunity.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The year 1918, at the age of nineteen, saw Coward write his first play as a solo playwright (*The Rat Trap*), but it would be another three years before he had his first true success. The 1920s was the optimum decade for Coward; it was undoubtedly the period that “made him”. In 1921, Coward made his first trip to America, hoping to interest producers there in his works. Whilst this did not prove fruitful, the atmosphere of Broadway and pace of works enthralled him and he duly tried to include this into his own works upon his return. He explained this during an interview for the BBC in 1966:

In the 20s and 30s whenever I was about to do a new production in England, I always used to go to New York for a fortnight and go to every single play because the tempo and the wonderful speed and vitality of the theatre was far superior to the English then.[[19]](#footnote-19)

At the age of twenty-two, Coward had his first major success in musical theatre with *London Calling!*; a revue staged by André Charlot[[20]](#footnote-20) and which made light of London society at the time. It also marked his first West End appearance with Gertrude Lawrence, with its success leading to Charles. B. Cochran[[21]](#footnote-21) inviting Coward to contribute on another revue: *On With the Dance* (1925). It was this revue which marked the beginning of a ten-year association and a successful partnership that saw the production of some of Coward’s most significant works. *This Year of Grace!* followed in 1928 and was the revue in which Coward allegedly remarked, “every word and note was written by me.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Coward had strong opinions on the art of the revue. In the ‘Preface’ to his *Collected Sketches and Lyrics*[[23]](#footnote-23), he discusses extensively (Appendix 1) the methodical approach required when writing revues and expands on this further forty years later when he wrote the Foreword to *Revue: A Story in Pictures*. Reflecting on the form in 1971, he once again wrote about the importance of the Running Order which he learned from Andre Charlot, whilst also emphasising that “a sketch for a revue must be quick, sharp, funny (or sentimental) and to the point, with a good, really good black-out line. Whether the performers are naked or wearing crinolines is quite beside the point; the same rule applies.”[[24]](#footnote-24) (See Appendix 2 for his full commentary on Revue).

**Coward Shows: West End to Broadway**

The focus of this study is the adaptation of a Noël Coward revue from the West End to Broadway. Mordden argues that the history of the transatlantic production of musicals falls into three periods:

1. From the late 1800s to 1900s or so

* The original work serves as a matrix for a new piece

1. From 1920 to exactly 29 April 1947

* Much less rewriting and even the occasional souvenir of the original: here Mordden cites Bobby Connolly’s choreography in both New York (1928) and London (1929) as an example, along with Coward’s *Bitter Sweet* (1929) to Broadway in a facsimile of the original staging, but with a new cast

1. 29 April 1947 and *Oklahoma!* to the present

* Performed in its original production in every particular aspect and with Americans in roles they had performed on Broadway or in the national company; a replica approach which has, Mordden argues, been preferred almost as a rule ever since[[25]](#footnote-25)

Coward’s musical theatre output, particularly during the relevant period for this study, falls under the second category, although *Set to Music*, as we will see in Chapters 2 and 3, was significantly more than just a “little re-writing” of *Words and Music* and was certainly not a “souvenir of the original.” However, whilst it was his first major adaptation for Broadway, it was not his first musical theatre experience.

Despite the fact that it was *The Greenwich Village Follies* *of 1919* which paved the way for the British revue on Broadway,[[26]](#footnote-26) according to Cochran, “it was raised to an entirely different plane with the arrival of Noël Coward.”[[27]](#footnote-27) *This Year of Grace* ran for 316 performances in London. Whilst it was still running to full capacity each night, Coward decided to put together the Broadway production which would star him and Beatrice Lillie. Several new numbers for Lillie (solo or in duet with Coward) were incorporated into the original London score for this new production as was the musical number ‘Mexico’ which was originally included in the London score before being cut during the try-outs. It was also during this production that the musical number ‘World Weary’ was heard for the first time and was clearly acknowledging jazz with the blues-y melodic touches in its first two phrases in an otherwise very reflective ballad. Cochran is reported to have said:

In *This Year of Grace* he [Coward] maintained a topical note throughout, which, to my mind, was largely responsible for the great success of the show, whilst the brilliance of his wit and the modernity of his music gave revue-producers the new inspiration they so urgently needed…

I think the process of unification is the most important element in the revue today. It is not enough to pitchfork on to the stage a series of sketches, songs and dances. There must be design and form, balance and rhythm, and the best way to achieve these objects is to put all your eggs in one basket, or, in other words, bank on one man’s inspiration and ability to carry out his ideas…

I believe the revue written and composed by twenty different people, however clever, cannot achieve its principal aim – to comment. When we read a good novel or watch a good play or study a fine newspaper article we want to hear the views of a single person who has something worthwhile to impart. The Tower of Babel principle in constructing revue can only result in an entertainment which is revue only in name.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

Although revues have, to date, been the subject of comparatively little scholarly literature, the little information that is available can provide us with an overview of the genre before Coward’s work and the type and style of revues which he would have been influenced by. Additionally, his own discussion on the art of the revue gives us an insight into the processes he went through and thoughts he had when writing his own. Altogether, this provides an informative insight as the study looks at the revue itself but also how *Set to Music* was a revue that had been specifically adapted for Broadway. The only books dealing with most of the revues are Bordman’s and Mander and Mitchenson’s. However, as Westover highlighted, the problem with the former is the absence of any musical analysis, although this is understandable given all that it is trying to encompass – there is a limit to the amount of space that can be devoted to any particular show. Equally, Stanley Green’s *Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre* briefly mentions Coward’s musical theatre career but, as part of a larger book, there is little scope for detail. The same applies to Mander and Mitchenson’s book, although *Revue: A Story in Pictures* is not supposed to provide such scholarly depth – as the title suggests, it merely provides a history of the genre through the medium of pictures, with the aid of an informative Foreword by Coward.

There is a vast array of literature on Coward, some more useful and scholarly than others. It quickly becomes apparent that there is a lot of gossip and hearsay attached to many of the published books and articles, not all of which is true. One thing that is striking though is the lack of primary sources used in such material, and yet there are extensive collections on Coward around the world, not least the dedicated Noël Coward archive which is deposited at the University of Birmingham and housed within its Cadbury Research Library. Another surprise is the lack of literature on his musical theatre career which was prolific and lasted for over fifty years. Sheridan Morley’s biography *A Talent to Amuse: A Biography of Noël Coward* is a starting point to learn a reliable overview of Coward’s life and also musicals, along with his other book, *Coward*. They only provide general information though and it soon becomes apparent that other authors on Coward have likely garnered their information from Morley’s books and Philip Hoare’s insightful and in-depth biography *Noël Coward: A Biography*. Stephen Cole’s *Noël Coward: A Bio-Bibliography* is perhaps the main source of information for anyone interested in Coward’s musicals, or any other aspect of his multifaceted career, with a brief overview provided for each show.

Coward’s autobiographies *Present Indicative* and *Future* *Indefinite* are, of course, excellent sources of information and points of reference for his life (both professional and personal), career and works, but are not particularly useful for the purpose of this study because they do not cover Coward’s early life and career. This is covered in *Past Conditional* which features at the back of *Future Indefinite* but is unfinished. Coward did not start keeping a diary (or journal, as he later referred to it) until 1941, so that leaves only Graham Payn and Cole Lesley’s respective books to offer a personal insight into the career of their friend.

It tends to be *Bitter Sweet* and *Sail Away* which are referred to the most, with regards to the musical theatre aspect of Coward’s career, sometimes alongside *This Year of Grace* and *London Calling!*. Reference to *Words and Music* is scarce, and *Set to Music* is acknowledged even less, if at all. As such, and because it is an important and significant work, marking Coward’s first major attempt at adapting a musical work specifically for the guise of American audiences, I realised that this study needs to address any idea that *Set to Music* is an irrelevance. Therefore, in Chapter 1, the focus is on the genesis of *Set to Music*. In order to do so, I firstly examine and discuss the background to the revue’s genesis from scratch. This is achieved mainly by looking at *Words and Music* and the relationships between Coward and Cochran, and Coward and John. C. Wilson. Chapters 2-4 examine the scripts; Chapter 2 looks at the sketches used in *Words and Music* but which were cut for the American production, whilst Chapter 3 focuses on how the remaining sketches were adapted for *Set to Music.* Chapter 4, meanwhile, focuses entirely on the new sketches that were written specifically for *Set to Music*. I look at potential reasons why the selected sketches were cut and broadly, how the new material that was written specifically for *Set to Music* highlights how Coward adapted his style and “Englishness” from his London revue *Words and* Music for Broadway. With two different scripts available for *Set to Music*, there is the scope to look at how the changes in Running Order shift the focus and the impact that this has.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I examine the critical reception of *Set to Music* and discuss what the critical judgements tell us about this revue. Drawing on all of this information, the purpose of this study is to examine how Coward adapted his style for Broadway, with the undertone highlighting any misperception that *Set to Music* is nothing more than *Words and Music* but with a different name. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to discuss a forgotten revue using scripts that were thought to be lost.

# **Chapter 1**

# **The Genesis of *Set to Music***

**A Noël Coward Revue: *Words and Music***

*Set to Music* is derived from *Words and Music*, which premiered in 1932, but it would be seven years before the former show opened on Broadway. Whilst they are two undeniably different revues, there are similarities between them, more of which will be discussed in a later chapter which will analyse these similarities and differences in much greater detail. As with most of Coward’s musicals, the genesis of neither revue has ever previously been recounted. Nor has either show been critiqued in any scholarly depth. Instead, both shows have only been granted a passing mention in the literature on Coward.

In his biography of Coward, *A Talent to Amuse*, Sheridan Morley claims that Coward approached the producer Charles B. Cochran[[29]](#footnote-29) (who produced a number of successful musicals and revues during the 1920s and 1930s, working closely with Coward during the early days of his career) with his ideas for *Words and Music*, which would be formed by the songs and sketches that he had written since *This Year of Grace!* four years earlier.[[30]](#footnote-30) Such material would include ‘Mad Dogs and Englishmen’, ‘Children of the Ritz’ and ‘Mad About the Boy’ as well as others. Although Coward was supposedly “unequivocal about wanting Cochran to put it [*Words and* Music] on,”[[31]](#footnote-31) it would be unlike any previous Cochran-Coward revue as Coward now believed he was in a position to assert his authority and decide the direction of his shows. Cole Lesley concisely explains the demands that his partner placed on Cochran for this show:

Noël was by now in a position to dictate his wishes to Cochran instead of the other way round, and insisted he could do without three of what Cochran had up to then considered the most essential ingredients of his revues: one or more glamorous star names, sensationally good dancing and an assembly of brilliant designers [Gladys had triumphantly designed the whole of *Cavalcade* and could do the same with *Words and Music*, which she did.][[32]](#footnote-32)

All of these “ingredients” had culminated in a very successful partnership. When forming a privately registered limited Syndicate ahead of the show, Cochran noted that *This Year of Grace!, Bitter Sweet*, *Private Lives* and *Cavalcade* “were all highly remunerative and resulted in a certified nett [sic] profit of no less than £175,586. The lowest of which gave a net return of over £28,000 and the highest approximately £62,000 thus providing to participants in them a very substantial return.”[[33]](#footnote-33) With the evidence to support his belief that his trusted formula worked and was appreciated by audiences, it is no surprise that Cochran was dismayed by such proposals. Conversely, the alternative argument offers a strikingly noteworthy point - that Cochran was potentially dubious about noting musical and revue successes, as he chose to name two plays in that list which could be considered odd given *Words and Music* was a revue and therefore noting drama was irrelevant. It seems that problems were further intensified by the revue containing “some rather downbeat songs and too much satire for his – and he felt sure for the public’s – liking.”[[34]](#footnote-34) The sketches would include attacks on the press, songs about the wealthy suggesting the effects of the Great Depression, an admonishment of the ‘younger generation’ and a light-hearted version of the serious drama *Journey’s End*.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Cochran’s protestations were to no avail as Coward was determined that this revue would be entirely his own work. Morley writes that Coward was determined that the piece “would not be the usual amalgam of writers, composers and lyricists all brought together under Cochran’s banner.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Whilst he cites no specific sources, it seems that Morley’s comments are supported by Graham Payn who also states in his book that Coward “was suggesting a one-man show, right down to the black, grey and white colour scheme he’d had Calthrop design for him.”[[37]](#footnote-37) The question may be raised as to why Cochran therefore did not simply abort the project when he genuinely believed that the show was at risk of proving a disappointment:

*Words and Music* was a jaded, sulky piece of writing with overtones of bitterness…It may have been an interesting Coward revue, but it was not a Cochran revue.[[38]](#footnote-38)

It is possible that Cochran felt unable to reject such an opportunity because, despite his misgivings about the show, it was still a revue which had been written by Coward at the peak of his career. Cochran’s fears for the piece would ultimately be justified, with audience numbers quickly dwindling, despite the reviews being largely positive. After the try-outs at the Opera House in Manchester, *The Spectator* was labelling their summary of reviews on the show as “The Irresistible Cochran-Coward Partnership.”[[39]](#footnote-39) Within this summary, other critics were equally as enthusiastic: “Mr Cochran and Mr Coward are responsible for one of the greatest stage successes of this generation,”[[40]](#footnote-40) “It reveals Noël Coward once again as our most adventurous, individual and intelligent writer of revues. It reveals Mr Cochran once again as the slickest ring-master that ever cracked a whip before a crowned head”[[41]](#footnote-41) and “Cochran and Coward form the most remarkable theatre partnership of the present day. It was Coward’s genius but it was Cochran’s courage and faith which gave this revue to the public.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

The London critics held similar views, with A. John Dannhorn writing for the *Musical Standard*, “It is altogether too clever, and each line is too valuable to be lost, as to a large extent it is lost, on an audience which is neither sufficiently intelligent nor sufficiently sharp of hearing to appreciate to the full the value of each scintillating line of dialogue and lyric that falls from the mouth of every character, from the leading lady to the most insignificant chorus-girl…”[[43]](#footnote-43) Despite the positive reception and the critics’ assumption of a long run, *Words and Music* ran for barely five months (164 performances in total) instead of the two years that Coward had hoped for. Significantly, it was the first Coward-Cochran production to lose money.

Although Coward did not want any “stars” in his revue as he wanted performers that would not be so egotistical that he would be unable to mould them to fulfil his own personal requirements for his characters, he identifies this as being a significant problem with the revue in his autobiography:

It was a good revue on the whole and received excellent notices but what it lacked was a big star, or better still, two big stars. The cast included Ivy St Helier, Joyce Barbour, John Mills, Romney Brent and Doris Hare, all of whom were expert performers but none of whom at this time had that indisputable star quality which commands queues at the box office.[[44]](#footnote-44)

This was of course what Cochran is alleged to have said was needed, but Coward at the time thought better of it. In an interview with a London correspondent, however, Cochran is reported to be supportive of Coward’s stance. The *Manchester Evening News* quoted Cochran as saying:

It will be different from anything Mr Coward has done before, and you know anything Mr Coward does is different from what anyone else does…

I expect to have about fifteen well-known artists in the show, but I may not name them. My idea is not to put one artist’s name in the biggest type and say ‘This is the best of all’. I hope they will all be stars in the popular mind, but I shall not single out any of them as topping the bill. All I want are stars in quality, not in name.[[45]](#footnote-45)

This statement by Cochran contradicts the notion that he did not support Coward’s decision not to have a star name. Cochran was not averse to using “big names” in his productions; after all, Alice Delysia was one of his biggest after travelling from Paris in 1914 to star in *Odds and Ends*.[[46]](#footnote-46) It is more probable that Cochran opted to publically support this new approach and appear united alongside Coward for the purpose of maintaining the Cochran-Coward partnership. Any hint of disagreement between the pair would have drawn media attention and thus drawn attention and focus on their relationship rather than the shows. With Coward being a key theatrical figure at this time, and much in demand, it would have been seemingly unwise for Cochran to cause friction.

Coward’s own views on his choice of whether or not to use “stars”, is interesting and it seems that Coward had rather conflicting views on why *Words and Music* experienced such limited success. In his book simply titled Noël, Charles Castle quotes Coward as saying that, “*Words and Music* was almost a very good revue, but it wasn’t quite. I’ve never quite made up my mind why. It could possibly have been my fault. But it wasn’t entirely. It had no great big star in it, though there was a wonderful cast – Ivy St Helier, Romney Brent. It ran for about eight months. Notices were terrible. They always were.”[[47]](#footnote-47) If this is to be believed (there is no reference to where or when Coward made this remark) then it differs from a comment that he makes in his third, unfinished autobiography *Past Conditional* where he does offer an explanation:

When I was a very little boy my beloved housemaid-cum-nurse [sic] Emma, used to admonish me by saying, ‘Don’t be too sharp or you’ll cut yourself!’ This I think, on looking back, was what was wrong with *Words and Music*. It was too clever by half. It contained too much satire and too little glamour to attract the masses. However as it didn’t exactly flop humiliatingly in either London or New York I can quite happily chalk it up as a near miss and remember it with affection.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Castle’s quotation resembles the comment that Coward makes regarding casting and the lack of a ‘star’. With this in mind and without further evidence to support his citation, it is plausible that Castle paraphrased Coward’s comment or misinterpreted what he said. The latter quotation highlights the focus on satire and little glamour as potential possibilities for the lack of audience enthralment. Certainly the emphasis on satire could have been a contributory factor; Coward was indeed very disparaging about society and culture at the time. The sketch ‘Children’s Hour’ for example, saw Coward satirise the pretensions of adults by infiltrating their children’s language through their remarks (as discussed later when looking at the issue of relevance). An example of this is at the end of the scene, which concludes with the number ‘Let’s Live Dangerously’; an upbeat number in 6/8 tempo that focuses on everyday habits. With regards to *Words and Music* containing “too little glamour”, whilst this is rather a derogatory remark about his female casting in the show, it would offer an explanation as to why Coward was so particular in the characteristics and appearances that he sought for his Show Girls in *Set to Music*. For example, on at least two occasions he requested that they were “beautiful” and “about the same height” before subsequently following this up with “gllrious glamorous [sic].”[[49]](#footnote-49)

As Coward notes in his autobiography, although *Words and Music* was not the success that he hoped it would be, neither could be it considered a flop. The show also certainly left a legacy behind, not least in terms of the musical numbers, most notably ‘Mad Dogs and Englishmen’ and ‘Mad About the Boy’. Although they were written ahead of *Words and Music* and not necessarily with the show in mind, it was in this revue that British audiences heard them for the first time. These two numbers especially, would continue to provide Coward with a handsome financial legacy. As Cole Lesley writes, “He personally was stuck with them for the rest of his life, always expected to sing one or the other at parties or cabaret appearances, unthinkable from his audience’s point of view that he should not.”[[50]](#footnote-50) However disappointed he was with the show, he must ultimately truly have regarded the show with affection to revive it on Broadway under a new name.

**A Revival for Broadway**

In the early autumn of 1938 Noël Coward and John. C. Wilson[[51]](#footnote-51) decided to rework and adapt *Words and Music* for an American audience. It would be named *Set to Music*. The music and lyrics will be discussed in a later chapter, but some of the songs that Coward had written for the London production were left in the show, with others being both added and removed; one addition was ‘The Stately Homes of England’ whilst ‘Mad Dogs and Englishmen’ was removed. Unlike *Words and Music*, this revue would feature a star in the form of Beatrice Lillie, as Wilson knew that this was essential for the success of the small-scale revue. The show opened in Boston on Boxing Day 1938 before transferring to Broadway, where critics applauded Beatrice Lillie but were more cautious and begrudging of praise for Noël Coward.

**Cochran vs. Wilson**

Wilson believed that big names needed to feature in *Set to Music*, just as Cochran did with *Words and Music*. Significantly, Coward heeded Wilson’s advice whereas he had rejected Cochran’s warnings. Before commencing the deeper analysis of *Set to Music* using primary sources and placing the revue in context, if we briefly examine Cochran and Wilson’s respective relationships with Coward, then it may help us to gain an insight into their working relationships and the impact that they had on Coward’s shows.

As we have already briefly discussed, the Coward-Cochran partnership was a very successful one until *Words and Music*. It commenced with the revue *On with the Dance* in 1925 and would last for the next nine years. From the outset, it looked as though this would be a fractious partnership. Coward had wanted complete authorship of *On with the Dance* but Cochran doubted his ability, despite his triumph with *London Calling!*, so he agreed only to let him do the book and lyrics, with the music being written by Philip Braham.[[52]](#footnote-52) Not to be outdone, however, Coward ensured that he would ultimately have to also provide the music. According to Morley, he achieved this through making the musical numbers an integral part of the sketches, meaning that there was no opportunity for Braham to insert his music into them, which would leave him distinctly on the periphery.[[53]](#footnote-53) From this incident, we can already determine that Coward would not be swayed by others as he was so confident of his own ability. With this in mind, it is of little surprise that he would choose not to listen to Cochran’s concerns about *Words and Music*.

Conversely, Coward’s working relationship with Wilson, in the beginning at least, seemed to run more smoothly as they shared ideas. Why this was the case is debatable, although their relationship was personal as well as professional.[[54]](#footnote-54) Coward met Wilson after a performance of *The Vortex* in the USA and would subsequently become his personal manager. Lorn Loraine, who had been Coward’s personal assistant for a considerable number of years (and would continue to hold this position until her death), felt uneasy about Wilson’s control, particularly once he was given power of attorney for his business affairs.[[55]](#footnote-55) It seems, however, that Coward was not blinded by love and was aware of Wilson’s misdemeanours. In a telegram sent to Wilson in 1930 whilst he was sailing to the USA, Coward wrote:

Darling Baybay, darling Jack

Just a kleptomaniac

Pinching gifts from Poppa’s house

Like a predatory louse.

Taking slyly without stint

Here a photo, there a print

Still, although you snatch and grab,

Poppa loves his darling Dab.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Stephen Citron’s comments in his book Noël & Cole: The Sophisticates that Coward trusted Wilson implicitly*[[57]](#footnote-57)*, are therefore undermined by this telegram, which is evidence that Citron’s comment is inaccurate and that actually Coward was choosing not to take any further action over it. This is an important difference and one that the comment fails to make abundantly clear.

This is all significant because, two years after *Words and Music* in 1934, Coward would part company with Cochran and establish his own production company, Transatlantic Productions, with Wilson, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Coward clearly felt that his future lay with Wilson rather than Cochran, although this would prove to be the wrong decision. He would not experience the same level of success with his revues again. Wilson’s influence in this decision is unknown but a letter dated 9 April 1934 (see below) from Coward to Cochran, informs him of his decision. Again, Citron’s discussion of this situation suggests that he has information regarding Coward’s decision, but it would seem that this is also unsubstantiated. He claims that Coward took notice when Wilson highlighted that “there was no reason for Cochran to take the lion’s share of the proceeds from what was essentially Coward’s work”[[58]](#footnote-58) and this was the catalyst behind ending the partnership.

I have decided after mature consideration to present my own work and other people’s plays in the future in partnership with Jack. This actually has been brewing in my mind over a period of years, and I am writing to you first in confidence because I want you to understand that there would be no question of forsaking you or breaking our tremendously happy and successful association for any other reason except that I feel this is an inevitable development of my career in the theatre.

Particularly I want you to realise how deeply grateful I am for all the generosity and courage and friendship you have shown me over everything we have done together…but above all, dear Cocky, I want to insist upon one important fact which, sentimental as it may seem, is on my part sincere, and this is that without your encouragement and faith in me and my work it is unlikely that I should ever have reached the position I now hold in the theatre, and that whatever may happen in the future I feel that there is a personal bond between us which has nothing to do with business or finance or production. Please understand all this and continue to give me the benefit of your invaluable friendship.[[59]](#footnote-59)

It is this “position” that he had in the theatre which was the deciding factor (aside from any ulterior motives from Wilson) in terminating the partnership. If Coward had not been so highly regarded, then it would have been far more difficult for him to have separated from Cochran because it is likely that he would have continued to require his support, both financially and professionally. Coward’s “inevitable development” in his career stemmed from their “tremendously happy and successful association” and so he was right to acknowledge Cochran’s role in that. It is this role however, that was fundamentally the cause of the problem. Coward, by this stage, no longer felt that he needed Cochran’s input and revue style and instead was capable of writing his own book, lyrics and music without any additional assistance. The difference between Cochran and Wilson here, is that Wilson merely produced Coward’s revues (albeit offering advice and suggestions along the way, but having no influence at all in the music or content), whereas Cochran was more forthright in his expectations and what his revues were to look like.

It would be a while before Cochran replied with a brief letter:

My dear Noël,

Many thanks for your letter of the 9th inst., which was found this morning under my bed, very much chewed up by my dachshund.

As you say, the development you refer to was inevitable, and I wish you and your associates the best of good fortune.

Meanwhile, believe me,

Yours as ever,

CBC[[60]](#footnote-60)

It is interesting how Cochran perceives the end of the partnership as being “inevitable”. Perhaps he knew it was the end when *Words and Music* lost money as this was the first time that it had occurred, or it could be that he knew the direction in which Coward was heading with Wilson and realised that he could no longer be a part of it. Either way, it would have been of little importance to Cochran given that none of Coward’s post-Cochran musicals enjoyed the same level of success and indeed Cochran would continue to produce successful shows (for example, *Anything Goes* in 1935) until his death in 1951.

To summarise, in *Set to Music* we have a revue that originated in London under the guise of *Words and Music* before being revived on Broadway seven years later. Whilst there are naturally similarities between the two, they are individual shows in their own right, with different sketches and musical numbers. From a pre-production perspective, the significant difference between them lies in the approach taken as a result of two different producers. With *Words and Music*, there was Cochran at the helm who wanted big names to feature in the show (as per convention) but had his suggestion firmly rebuked, but on Broadway, the norm would prevail (in the form of Beatrice Lillie) but under the direction of Wilson instead.

**The signing of Beatrice Lillie**

The casting of Beatrice Lillie is significant because she was going to be billed as the “star” of the show. In opting for Lillie, Coward had chosen someone who had first appeared on Broadway in the British import *Andre Charlot’s Revue of 1924* and so she was accustomed to the British style of work. She would return to the Broadway stage on several occasions and usually in musical revues where her “distinctive caricatures and outrageous comic bits could be more easily incorporated.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Coward had also previously worked extensively with Lillie and so knew that she was not averse to improvising. With this in mind, Coward sent her a message as she was en route to New York for the revue. Dated 1938, it reads:

Pretty witty Lady Peel

Never mind how sick you feel

Never mind your broken heart

Concentrate and learn your part.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Her humorous reply was as follows:

Thanks musty dusty Noël C

For beastly wire to Lady P

To concentrate is hard I fear

So now she’s crying in her beer.[[63]](#footnote-63)

In copies of the telegrams[[64]](#footnote-64) that were sent between Coward and Wilson during the early stages of *Set to Music*, we learn that Beatrice Lillie was in fact semi-committed to another show with Richard Rodgers and Moss Hart. The fact that Coward persevered so much in securing her for his show demonstrates how desperately he wanted her and supports Castle’s claims that the show was “a vehicle” for her. In a telegram to Wilson dated 30 August 1938, Coward writes that:

BEATTIE DELIGHTED HALF COMMITTED TO DO SHOW WITH HARRY KAUFMAN BUT NOTHING SETTLED SHE DOES NOT WANT LET KAUFMAN DOWN AND SUGGESTS YOU TALK TO HIM STOP OBVIOUSLY AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED YOU MUST PRESENT SHOW HOWEVER IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY DAUFMAN [sic] MIGHT COME IN STOP ANYHOW CABLE ME BEAURIVAGE LAUSANNE…[[65]](#footnote-65)

It seems that timing was an issue, with Lillie already semi-committed to an alternative show. However, seven days later, Coward informed Wilson that he had “JUST SPOKEN TO BEA SHE SAYS DEFINITELY OKAY SO THAT’S THAT WILL SEND YOU LONG CABLE TOMORROW STATING ALL REQUIREMENTS CHOOP.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Their delight at snaring Lillie away from Rodgers and Hart for their own production continued as far as to appeasing her every whim and demand as far as possible, thereby arguably making the revue a platform for her. The show being “a vehicle” for Lillie is taken to a completely new level once it becomes apparent that she was being kept informed of every stage of the process, including the casting. A telegram sent from Coward to Wilson on 8 September 1938 states:

…BEA DELIGHTED WITH MATERIAL BUT UPSET ABOUT DOWLING TRY PERSUADE HIM COME AS STAGE DIRECTOR WITH STAGE MANAGER UNDER HIM EVEN IF ONLY FOR LIMITED PERIOD AND SAY MY SPECIAL WISH…[[67]](#footnote-67)

Although there is no reference to his forename, we can assume that “Dowling” refers to Edward Duryea Dowling.[[68]](#footnote-68) Aside from Dowling being her manager, friend and lover[[69]](#footnote-69), but there is also the possibility that she thought the show stood a better chance of success with an experienced director in revues at the helm.

Coward’s attempts to lure Dowling to the production, if only to pacify Lillie, were to no avail with Dowling playing no part in *Set to Music*. What role Dowling would have played is unclear because Coward stipulated that he was definitely not prepared to consider co-directing the revue. In a series of telegrams between Coward and Wilson, Coward made this known in no uncertain terms. Wilson informed Coward on 26 September that “Dowling has just phoned saying he phoned Beattie and is coming Wednesday to see me about ‘directing with Mr. Coward.”[[70]](#footnote-70) Coward’s reply the following day left Wilson with no doubt that this was not to be the case, forcing Wilson to subsequently reply, apologising for even mentioning the possibility: “Certainly would not consider codirecting with Dowling.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

Fortunately, it seems that Dowling’s non-involvement did not hinder Lillie’s participation as she still signed up for the role, opting not to feature in Kaufman’s show instead. The press announcement confirms this and also emphasises her importance by referring to the rest of the cast as “Miss Lillie’s immediate supporting cast” and stating that Coward will compose new material especially for her:

Mr John. C. Wilson announces that he will present Miss Beatrice Lillie in a new Intimate Revue by Noël [sic] Coward this autumn. This Revue as yet untitled will be composed partly of new items especially written for Miss Lillie, and partly of certain numbers ~~and sketches~~ used in previous Coward ~~Revues~~ Musicals in London but never seen in this country. Miss Lillie’s immediate supporting cast will be recruited in England, especially for sketches and items requiring English artists and the balance of the company engaged on Broadway. Mr. Coward will come over personally to direct the production which is scheduled to open out of town about the end of November and come into New York around Christmas at a theatre not yet selected. Mr. Harry Kaufman, who was to have presented Miss Lillie this season, will have a financial interest in Mr. Wilson’s production.[[72]](#footnote-72)

The announcement also acknowledges *Words and Music*, yet it is interesting how there appears to be a concerted effort to minimise the connection between the two shows. For example “and sketches” is scored out, as is “Revues” which is instead replaced with “Musicals”. Additionally, *Words and Music* is not specifically mentioned – this is likely to have been deliberate for the purpose of ensuring that *Set to Music* had its own identity, instead of being known as the remake of *Words and Music*.

Rehearsals involving Lillie were evidently rather eventful. In his book *The Life of Noël Coward*, Cole Lesley remarks that during rehearsals:

Beattie again behaving as she had in 1928, a devil all through and right up to the opening, after which she became an angel of sweetness…Once the curtain went up on opening night, however, the audience was as happy to see Beattie as she was to hear them laughing; she made a huge success and all was forgiven.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Based on these words, it becomes apparent how a $2000 salary was justified for Lillie, which was ten times more than the next best paid actors, Hugh French and Penelope Dudley Ward respectively, at $200 apiece.[[74]](#footnote-74) With the wage bill costing $5139[[75]](#footnote-75), Lillie accounted for a substantial proportion of the bill and so it was effectively true when the critics referred to the show as being “an evening with Lillie” – there was no mistaking the fact that she was the “star” of the show, both on and off the stage. Wilson certainly achieved his goal when establishing that a “star” was essential for the revue; in comparison, the rest of the cast were merely supporting Beatrice Lillie.

**Pre-Broadway Arrangements**

In terms of the pre-Broadway tour, Wilson suggested Boston and Washington and Coward commented on 17 September that he believed that it would be a “wiser plan opening Boston first week December instead of last week November.”[[76]](#footnote-76) They were also acutely aware of how imperative it was for *Set to Music* not to clash out of town with Dodie Smith’s *Dear Octopus* which was at a similar stage in production to Coward’s revue. Three weeks later on 3 October, we learn of the arrangements for *Set to Music* – Wilson suggested “opening Boston December 26, New York four weeks later.”[[77]](#footnote-77) There is evidently further correspondence between the two gentlemen missing because four days later there is a discussion regarding Philadelphia, which Coward vehemently opposed because of its close proximity to New York, arguing that “everybody comes out and criticises”[[78]](#footnote-78) and only wanted one week in Washington rather than the two that had been proposed (again, there is no documentary evidence for the two week proposal). They believed that they would be rather forced to open in Washington as opposed to Boston as originally intended due to a Freedley musical also premiering at the same time in Boston starring Ethel Merman, which Wilson described as being “enormous.” Instead though, rather than open in Washington, they opted to change the opening date in Boston, which created numerous logistical problems given the close proximity to Christmas and the lack of theatre space.

With the threat of *Dear Octopus* looming, Coward proposed opening *Set to Music* on Christmas Day, although this eventually became Boxing Day with Smith’s show not opening for another three days, thereby potentially providing Coward with an advantage for his show. Examining Wilson’s struggle to accommodate Coward’s wishes and placing *Set to Music* at an advantage, particularly given the time of year highlights how fortunate they probably were to secure the position and timing that they did. As Wilson said, it was:

Somewhat difficult as no theatre wants to lose Christmas week so that we can be outbid by any attraction seeking both those weeks. Have even offered to open Saturday night New Year’s Eve if that will help us get booking from rival show…[[79]](#footnote-79)

Although insignificant in terms of its debut on Broadway, it is still significant because of the importance given to trialling shows in other cities ahead of their debut in New York. That way, if any amendments are required they can be done, ensuring the show is at its absolute best on its debut and for the critics. *Set to Music* was first presented by Wilson at the Shubert Theatre in Boston on 26 December 1938, as proposed, before subsequently transferring to the Music Box Theatre in New York on 18 January 1939 where it ran for a total of 129 performances.

As we move on now to examine the score and how it was adapted to reflect the cultural differences between the two countries, this chapter has demonstrated the significance of the genesis and the meticulous focus on detail that Coward took. It is clear that, through casting Beatrice Lillie, he hoped to correct the mistake that he had made in London. In choosing her, he had also selected someone who he had not only previously worked with, but who was successful in America, in revues.

The genesis of *Set to Music* also highlights the concerted efforts made to ensure this revue was not simply a remake of *Words and Music*. Under the new direction of Wilson, *Set to Music* was also the transition from the successes Coward enjoyed for over a decade with Cochran to the beginning of a new era with Wilson. This period also marked the commencement of Coward being firmly in charge of his productions. The Coward-Cochran relationship was starting to become strained as Coward grew in stature and in turn felt confident to assert his authority over his own works, often in conflict with Cochran and his approach. The different relationship Coward had with Wilson meant that the former could exercise his authority more forcefully, whilst also listening and in some cases, heeding the advice of Wilson.

# **Chapter 2**

# **From *Words and Music* to *Set to Music***

Chapter 1 has already covered the genesis of *Set to Music*, which included reference to the 1932 London production *Words and Music*. In order to examine the adaptation process regarding the former show, this chapter will endeavour to look further at the premise of the show and the sketches which were cut for the Broadway production. For those cut sketches, the chapter will attempt to draw conclusions as to why Coward did not select them for *Set to Music*.

As a direct result of the impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, revues became synonymous with lavish spectacle but the costs are these productions became prohibitively expensive for limited budgets during the Depression. Lehman Engel[[80]](#footnote-80) discussed this in his book *The American Musical Theater*:

The public had wearied of ever-increasing lavishness, and the growing cost of this lavishness made the future for producers an impossibility. The formula of girl and scenery and costumes had become passé and no longer interested the public. The old revue passed totally out of existence. Two factors clearly motivated the style of the new revue… One of these was the need imposed by the new kind of audience to deal with literate ideas, which would give a show with some intelligent audience identifiable and sustained interest…The second factor – at least as important as the first – was money. These were Depression years, and even established giants in the area had failed and closed up shop.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Korey R. Rothman cites this quote from Engel in his thesis *Somewhere There’s Music: Nancy Hamilton, The Old Girls’ Network and The American Musical Theater of the 1930s and 1940s* before going on to argue that the “intimate” revue reached its peak during the Great Depression – the antithesis of Ziegfeld’s elaborate shows. To support his stance, he cites Engel’s viewpoint on the subject:

These were the Depression years…Since the established revue producers had begun noticeably to feel the financial punch and were experiencing increasing difficulty in raising money, the most viable productions were those on a small and simple scale, and the material itself for such productions had to be cast in new and revolutionary forms.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Coward would have known this, both from his productions in the UK and USA. He would have witnessed first-hand the proliferation of theatrical entertainments that seemed committed to effecting positive social change during the 1930s. Through his many trips to the USA during this period[[83]](#footnote-83), he would have been fully aware of the works of Rodgers and Hart which eschewed topics of “young, rich playboys and debutantes in love” to concentrate instead on “themes of social significance” and when lyricists “began to criticise everything around them, audiences stayed and listened.”[[84]](#footnote-84) One such example was *Of Thee I* Sing (1931)[[85]](#footnote-85) which was the first American musical with a consistently satirical tone – Congress, the U.S Supreme Court, the Presidency and the democratic process itself were all targets of this satire. Coward followed suit with the satirical approach and “themes of social significance” in *Words and Music*. As both Engel and Mates discuss, the focus now was on smaller productions but ones which had meaning to them whilst also providing entertainment.

Although Coward was fortunate in having the financial backing of Cochran, the social predicament of the nation and the subsequent precarious financial state of the theatre industry at the time, meant that he was not completely protected from the fallout of the Depression. Moreover, Coward’s career and life up to this point indicate that he was always socially aware and so he would not have wished to be seen as overly extravagant in the staging of his works – his primary aim was to entertain (Appendix 3), but to also use the medium of the theatre to share his views and comment on society values. Cochran’s interview with the *Evening Standard* substantiates this:

The new Noël Coward revue…will not be spectacular. Of course, such scenes as demand careful staging…will be treated adequately, and possibly more than adequately. But the aim of the revue will be wit – a *revue d’esprit*, in fact.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Coward achieved his objective, with the critic C.B. Mortlock commenting how “Once again, Mr Coward appears in the role of satirist, but the power of his biting commentary on the futilities of the day is so generously mixed with the jam of melody and wit that the laughter was continuous.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

In the seven years that lapsed between *Words and Music* and *Set to Music*, the Revue had developed into a medium for topical satire, such as that seen in *As Thousands Cheer* (1933) and *Pins and Needles* (1937). *Ziegfeld Follies* had also been a form which reflected the society which had done so much to inspire it, including the scenes of national pride and unity indicated through patriotic scenes and use of satire to mock political figures. Rosaline Biason in her thesis [[88]](#footnote-88) identifies the success of *The Follies* (Appendix 4) and we can identify these key elements in later revues too – in essence, Ziegfeld’s model was modified and became less elaborate. Coward, having worked with Ziegfeld, with the latter offering to advise on the Broadway transfer of *Bitter Sweet*, would have seen this. It would therefore have become apparent to Coward that *Words and Music* needed to be adapted to ensure that the sketches were topical for American audiences and as such were ones which reflected contemporary issues. Through his musical theatre output and specifically *Set to Music*, he had the opportunity to add his opinion on society and current affairs at the time. As Stanley Green articulates:

The musical theatre – the most opulent, escapist, extravagant, and unabashedly commercial form of the theatre – could not hide from what was going on. Of course, it could still provide relief from reality. It could still offer evenings of mirth and song and glamour. But it showed a growing awareness of its own unique ability to make telling comments on such issues of the day as the folly of war, municipal corruption, political campaigns, the workings of federal governments, the rising labor movement, the dangers of both the right and the far left, and the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. It discovered that a song lyric, a tune, a wisecrack, a bit of comic business, a dance routine could say things with even more effectiveness than many a serious minded drama simply because the appeal was to a far wider spectrum of the theatregoing public.[[89]](#footnote-89)

As such, ten sketches were cut from *Words and Music*, nine of which were musical numbers (see Table 1). These will be briefly discussed as a means of tracking the adaptation process.

**The Cut Sketches**

Whilst there are no known surviving drafts or revisions of the *Words and Music* script (only the published version), there is a note in the ‘Words and Music’ folder in the Mander and Mitchenson Collection, which reads that “only very slight changes were made between the Manchester try-out and the London production”.[[90]](#footnote-90) However, we know that this is not entirely accurate. The Adelphi Theatre programme for the show, which is dated “1st production Sept 10, 1932,”[[91]](#footnote-91) has a different running order than the one which features in the published script. Firstly, in the published script, Act 1, Scene 3 is titled ‘Let’s Live Dangerously’ whereas the programme refers to the scene by ‘Children’s Hour’. The ‘Prelude to Finale’ is also missing from the running order in the published script, although we can see that the scene has simply been renamed ‘Débutantes’, which sees the four girls singing the one-stanza reprise of the number (Seven years later in *Set to Music,* this was considered an unnecessary extra – as Appendix 5 indicates). The sketch featured initially before being cut during a revision to Act 2 that occurred on or around 4 February (It was not included in any further revisions). With these revisions taken into account, it becomes clear that the Manchester and London versions of *Words and Music* differed. It is probable that other revisions were made at various points too, but for the purpose of this discussion and in the absence of a contemporary working script, the following discussion of *Words and Music* will refer to the published script. For *Set to Music*, two sources are being used: the undated script[[92]](#footnote-92) and the script dated 13 February which I am citing as the final script.[[93]](#footnote-93)

This ‘Cut Sketches’ section will be split into four sub-sections: ‘Issue of Relevance’, ‘Surprising Choice’, ‘Development of Ballet in America’ and ‘Theme Previously Covered on Broadway’. Each respective sketch will then be discussed under one of the sub-sections. Due to the nature of this discussion, the sketches[[94]](#footnote-94) which were cut without an obvious reason other than Coward presumably believing he could improve on them will not be covered. In essence, they were perhaps considered to be too general and more American-society appropriate ones were required. Part of the attraction of *Set to Music* for Coward must have been the opportunity to showcase original material with a new cast led by Beatrice Lillie. Nevertheless, some of the omissions from *Words and Music* are indicative of an overall shift in gesture towards catering for an American audience.

**Table 1: Running Orders for *Words and Music* and *Set to Music***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Words and Music*** | ***Set to Music*[[95]](#footnote-95)** |
| **Part One** | **Act One** |
| Opening Chorus | Fragonard’s Impression |
| Débutantes | Débutantes |
| Let’s Live Dangerously | Mad About the Boy |
| Children of the Ritz | Pastimes |
| Mad Dogs and Englishmen | Weary of it All |
| Débutantes | Children of the Ritz |
| Let’s Say Good-bye | Madame Dines Alone |
| Hall of Fame   * Announcement * The Man Who Caught the Biggest Shrimp * The Oldest Postmistress in England * The Man who Rowed Across Lake Windermere in an Indian Rubber Bath * The Holiday Mermaid * The Clergyman Who’s Never Been to London * My Life Story * Choral Finale | Never Again |
| Mad About The Boy | Midnight Matinée |
| Journey’s End |  |
| **Part Two** | **Act Two** |
| Housemaid’s Knees | Children of the Ritz |
| Fairy Whispers | Three White Feathers |
| Children of the Ritz | Débutantes |
| Ballet Announcement   * Club * Boarding House * Crèche | Secret Service |
| Something to do with Spring | Stately Homes |
| Wife of an Acrobat | Marvellous Party |
| Younger Generation | Mr. Carp |
| Midnight Matinée | Rug of Persia |
| Débutantes | The Party’s Over Now |
| Three White Feathers |  |
| The Party’s Over Now |  |

**Issue of Relevance**

Understanding the audience was key to the adaptation process and, as such, it was necessary to cut sketches so that Coward could include new ones which were topical for the time and for Americans. For example, ‘Mad Dogs and Englishmen’ had already been “sung a year or two before in America by Beatrice Lillie in ‘The Little Show’”[[96]](#footnote-96) and so therefore it was not new and had little relevance to American audiences.

Figure 1: The arrival of the Rev. Inigo Banks on his rickshaw accompanied by twelve natives.[[97]](#footnote-97)

In *Words and Music*, ‘Mad Dogs and Englishmen’ had followed a sketch which was fundamentally about the British Empire, as one Manchester critic pointed out: “The British Empire of the great white sahib does not escape a sly kick when the planters sing “No matter how much we may sozzle and souse, / The sun never sets on Government House.””[[98]](#footnote-98)

Similarly, the subject matter in ‘Journey’s End’ made its inclusion questionable and it is not difficult to see why Coward took the decision to cut it. The sketch was a condensed version of R. C. Sheriff’s play which quickly became popular internationally and opened on Broadway in 1930 with a subsequent revival in New York in 1939, so many Americans would have seen it already. The play, set in the trenches, provides a glimpse into the experiences of the officers of a British army infantry during World War I, but it also includes the orchestra playing ‘Deutschland über Alles’. Not only did the strong British component mean it was irrelevant in topic, but the inclusion of a song about Germany being “above all else in the world”[[99]](#footnote-99) would have been highly insensitive at a time of impending war. Moreover, it had been badly received by critics in the UK – as Ivor Brown succinctly said, it was “the most ambitious of Mr Coward’s burlesques and not the least witty.”[[100]](#footnote-100) With this in mind and the critical acclaim of *Hellzapoppin*, Coward had little choice but to cut this sketch or risk heavy criticism and unfavourable comparisons.

Figure 2: 'Journey's End'[[101]](#footnote-101)

Although the revue was never going to be in the style of *Hellzapoppin* or *Scandals*, *Set to Music* still needed to fit the revue genre, albeit in Coward’s more sophisticated style. These sketches lacked the satirical or topical commentary that was expected and this was compounded further with the British theme.

The issue of relevance applies in ‘Children’s Hour’ / ‘Let’s Live Dangerously’[[102]](#footnote-102) when Coward uses the naivety of children and the guise of cultural differences to discuss adult themes. ‘Children’s Hour’ is a short sketch that highlights two very different cultures when three children play together. In the midst of the innocence of a child’s doll’s house hides a cocktail bar which Jane and Bobby proceed to use. Contradicting the earlier notion by Lilli’s mother that “at home in Vienna her little friends are so formal, so comme il faut…” whilst “Here everything is more free and gay,”[[103]](#footnote-103) we see that Lilli hides cigarettes which hang “*from a little gold chain inside her dress*.”[[104]](#footnote-104) The perceived naivety of children is undermined here, something that is further addressed later as the children discuss sex with it becoming clear that the children have overheard adult conversations and are subsequently repeating their thoughts.

Figure 3: Lilli, Jane and Bobby in 'Children's Hour' making cocktails and smoking cigarettes.[[105]](#footnote-105)

The trio that follows, ‘Let’s Live Dangerously’, contributed little to the Broadway dynamic that was intended but was nevertheless an upbeat number befitting the tone of the lyrics which portray determination to fight any despondency and “to grab every opportunity.”[[106]](#footnote-106) This determination is further enhanced musically by the accents on the words “Life” and “rule” (Figure 4) and “Let’s” and the first syllable of “turbulently” (Figure 5) reinforces the determination too by placing a stronger emphasis and attack on these key words. There is also a focus on the rhyming of the lyrics (Figure 4), although discussing living “dangerously” and “boisterously” whilst leading “moralists the devil of a dance”[[107]](#footnote-107) at a time of economic hardship and depravity might have seemed unduly provocative to audiences (Figure 5).

Figure 4: The rhythms portray determination to fight any feelings of despondency in ‘Let’s Live Dangerously’.

Figure 5: The tone of the refrain is exemplified here.

Moreover, the focus is very much on Anglo-German cultures, with particular emphasis placed on the British culture – the mothers are having afternoon tea whilst their children play.

**Surprising Choice**

‘The Younger Generation’ was perhaps the surprise choice to be cut as it did have a risqué tone to it, which comes as a surprise at the end of the sketch. Throughout, the mother has supposedly come to the realisation that she is coming to the end of her life and that her four daughters represent the next generation. As such, she realises that there is no virtue in looking back (Figure 6).

Figure 6: The syncopated rhythms help to keep the mood uplifting and not depressive.

Coward focuses on the image of the elderly mother through the daughters checking that she has her glasses, library book and hot-water bottle before leaving her for the evening whilst they go out. Here, he is depicting the scene of a typical elderly lady, which he subsequently mocks by transforming her into this wily lady who transgresses from this persona and prepares for a night out herself. This is far from how the daughters view their mother and as such, Coward is reflecting general views on age here too. The concluding scene, “an endless stream of YOUNG MEN [sic] in evening dress march into the room”[[108]](#footnote-108), leaves the audience to imagine what lay ahead. As the critic C.B. Mortlock noted in London, this number was “the sort of tune that you cannot get out of your head”[[109]](#footnote-109) and along with its risqué tone, which was not uncommon for American revues. The one component it lacked was being topical and so therefore this could explain why it was cut.

Figure 7: The Mother (Rita Lyle) with her Young Men.

**Development of Ballet in America**

There are two plausible reasons why the Ballet scenes were cut: logistics and the development of ballet in America in 1938/39. The Music Box Theatre is considerably smaller than the Adelphi Theatre (Figure 8) and so, with a reduced stage capacity (Figure 9), it may have proved too problematic to include it.

Figure 8: The stage at the Adelphi Theatre, London.[[110]](#footnote-110)

Figure 9: The stage at Music Box Theater.[[111]](#footnote-111)

The second and alternative reason for the omission of the Ballet from *Set to Music* is style; for Broadway at this time, it may have been considered old-fashioned. It was a comic number satirising the “modern” ballet which was being developed in America and showed various classes of British society performing typical activities in the form of dance. Ballet in America was not new and had been growing in popularity, so much so that there were American tours of the competing Ballet Russe troupes by this point and George Balanchine[[112]](#footnote-112) had established his first company with Lincoln Kirstein[[113]](#footnote-113) (the School of American Ballet). Furthermore, Broadway had already seen more sophisticated “modern” ballet with an American theme in *Slaughter on 10th Avenue*[[114]](#footnote-114) and subsequent work on other Rodgers and Hart shows.

Figure 10: Ballet Scenes[[115]](#footnote-115)

**Theme previously covered on Broadway**

For *Set to* Music to be successful, the revue needed to focus on original topics and ones which would be popular – as such, ‘Hall of Fame’ was surplus to requirements. The sketches focus on Coward’s cynical attitude towards the Press, something which is summed up in the ‘Choral Finale’. It is full of satire as he criticises the Press’ power and its focus on triviality. Even the first phrase expresses such a sentiment (Figure 11). The *ff* dynamic marking along with the marching music suggests power and stature, which are two key traits that Coward has been opposing throughout the sketch, thereby enhancing the satire and focusing wholeheartedly on the message of the sketch, one which is still relevant today. Whilst the American revue *As Thousands Cheer* centred on a newspaper, Coward perhaps felt that this sketch in *Set to Music* would have limited appeal on Broadway due to the country’s liberated stance on the Press.

Figure 11: The satirical nature of the lyrics is as relevant today as it was during the 1930s.

As this chapter has shown, in order for new sketches to be included in the revue, it was necessary for some to be cut. They were cut for various different reasons but ultimately what they all had in common was the lack of social, political, topical and satirical bite that Coward was looking for in *Set to Music*. He knew that Broadway audiences had come to expect “raw” entertainment and had become accustomed to shows being on the cutting edge of debate in manners of sexuality, poverty, crime and other social problems. Coward assumed the position of entertaining his audiences but not providing the base element that had started to dominate; in essence, his revue would be more refined.

Nevertheless, Coward knew that in order to have any degree of success, his revue still had to be topical and satirical but most importantly, relevant to America. Of course, Coward’s stance was helped somewhat by the decision of Fiorella La Guardia[[116]](#footnote-116) to “cleanse New York’s performance scene”[[117]](#footnote-117) which was one of his primary objectives. To achieve this, he authorised the Commissioner of Licenses to revoke the licenses of theatres that was housing any offensive productions.[[118]](#footnote-118) This, of course, forced theatres to reconsider what it chose to stage which proved advantageous to Coward. Although the likes of *Scandals* and *Hellzapoppin* had been permitted, a more subdued tone was not completely unheard of – thus leaving Coward with scope to further modify *Words and Music* and write new material for his take on a Broadway revue.

# **Chapter 3**

# **Adapting the Sketches**

Part of the process involving the composition of this new Broadway revue was to adapt some of the sketches that Coward had used in *Words and Music*. As such, whilst ten sketches were cut and nine new ones were written specifically for the show, it was also important to modify some of the existing sketches so that they were topical. This undermines sources (both paper and online) which suggest that *Set to Music* is simply *Words and Music* but with a new name. One such example is Dan Dietz’s book *Off Broadway Musicals, 1910-2007: Casts, Credits, Songs, Critical Reception and Performance Data of More Than 1,800 Shows*[[119]](#footnote-119) but this is an incorrect assumption and the show should be considered in its own entity. As part of the adaptation process, the running order differed from what it was at the start of the process and the eventual order that was performed on Broadway (Appendices 6-9).

Nathan Hurwitz defines an American revue as being “an evening of songs, comic sketches, dance, variety acts and choruses of beautiful girls wearing costumes that displayed their beauty to maximum effect and with material that was topical and often satirical”[[120]](#footnote-120) and according to Stanley Green,[[121]](#footnote-121) Coward was “a distinctive creator of smart, satirical revues…”[[122]](#footnote-122) This chapter will examine these revisions and the adaptations that were made to the sketches, with the purpose of examining how Coward conceived *Set to Music* specifically for Broadway. The chapter will be divided into the following sub-sections: social system, gender and sexuality, and race with the purpose of looking at the sketches and revisions made to them within their broader context. As this chapter is focusing on how sketches were adapted specifically for New York, those that underwent general revisions[[123]](#footnote-123) will not be discussed.

**Social System**

One of the consequences of the Depression was social readjustment – ideologies had changed and alternative options were being sought. In his article ‘’Anything Goes’ on an ocean liner: Musical comedy as a carnivalistic heterotopia’, George Burrows argues that this stretched as far as the ‘American Dream’ being undermined by the economic crash and “the very evident hangover of poverty and misery that followed it.”[[124]](#footnote-124) He quotes Morris Dickstein, who notes that the ‘American Dream’ “became popular during the 1930s only because it was considered an ideology that needed urgent critique if a post-Depression society was to be countenanced.”[[125]](#footnote-125) James Truslow Adams, meanwhile, conceptualises it as an aspiration of living where life is rich for all and the opportunities there to lead lives based on high material value – in effect, where money is required.[[126]](#footnote-126)

The popularity of the ‘American Dream’ concept meant that, understandably, increasing numbers began to believe this lifestyle was available, subsequently seeking it to ensure they were not left on the periphery of society. Of course, one of the most significant problems with this was that too many people became empowered by consumerism and forgot what was really important in life. Coward touches on this in three of his sketches: ‘Children of the Ritz’, ‘Midnight Matinee’ and ‘Three White Feathers’.

‘Children of the Ritz’ required little modification from its use in *Words and Music*. The sketch laments the lives that these young women once had. Gone are the luxuries in life, instead replaced by being forced to economise and left to wonder “just how long we’re going to sink or swim.”[[127]](#footnote-127) The line “The world is tumbling around us”[[128]](#footnote-128) is a reference to the Great Depression. Although this was more applicable in 1939 to American audiences, it was still relevant in *Words and Music* as the world’s economy began to suffer from the fallout of 1929. Part Two of the sketch is also unchanged from its original form and it is this second part that reinforces how Coward satirises the upper-class children and how they are unable to cope when there is no money – everything has changed since the beginning of the Great Depression. They are lamenting the lost glory, wealth and lavishness of the 1920s (Figure 13). 100,000 homeowners lost their properties in 1930, with the number escalating to 250,000 in 1932 with approximately 13,000,000 Americans out of work by 1933.[[129]](#footnote-129) By 1938, the number of unemployed was 10,390,000 but this was still 18.91% of the population.[[130]](#footnote-130)

Figure 12: The Children of the Ritz[[131]](#footnote-131)

Coward acknowledges the required changes in social behaviour in two of the verses. Mindful of the fact that he is still providing light entertainment, he covers the plight of the audience members using humour and mockery which is also reflected in the music as well as the lyrics.

Figure 13: 'Children of the Ritz' - the music is emphasising the lyrics.

Figure 13 shows the chords getting richer on the forbidden words because this is the lifestyle that these people are accustomed to – they do not work and spend their time “playing”. Coward draws attention to these images, adding emphasis to them and reminding the audience of the past. So as not to dwell too much on this, the next verse highlights the changes that have to be made, with the tempo marking being *Brighter*. There is a sense of acceptance and normality in the tone, but Coward is still mocking the audience with the line, “Only one car now”. Whilst millions of people are homeless, they may have had to reduce their number of cars but they can at least still afford one. This is the ultimate point of the sketch: Coward is mocking the upper-classes who still enjoyed a privileged lifestyle by comparison to many millions of people.

Coward is taking a similar mocking tone in ‘Midnight Matinee’ when the scene cuts to the pre-production meeting of the ball and we see the cast debating the characters and their costumes. By each trying to out-do one another on who is going to portray the most superior character, Coward is mocking upper-class behaviour by having one of the characters not knowing who Diane de Poitiers was. While they are supposed to be staging an amateur production, the irony is that these women are clearly over-acting and dramatizing their comments. After continuing to discuss their night in a rather supercilious manner as they all believe they are superior to others, the sketch proceeds to the actual event where everything possible goes wrong (Figure 14). The comedy element of this sketch is further heightened by Coward’s lead-up into this as each woman is humiliated. Once again, the satirical nature of the revue has come to the forefront and Coward delivers his views on society, particularly those who believe they are superior to others.

Figure 124: A scene from the production in 'Midnight Matinee'

This sketch in the early, undated script of *Set to Music* is the condensed version of the one in *Words and Music*. The missing material is superfluous, failing to add any drama or further interest by its inclusion and instead it could be argued that its omission actually enhances the sketch as it removes the element of repetition. The character Mrs. Wilson even comments, “I must say I find this discussion very tedious.”[[132]](#footnote-132) Considering that, by this stage, five pages of script had already been dedicated to this topic of who would portray who, this sentiment feels quite appropriate. Further refinements in the later version of the script,[[133]](#footnote-133) helps to make the sketch seem better constructed and more purposeful, whilst the additional clarity also helps to reaffirm Coward’s critique.

The social and class system is also addressed in ‘Three White Feathers’ where Coward also addresses the problem of the difficulties in improving one’s social standing. The sketch written for *Words and Music* provided all of the required sentiments in the early script of *Set to Music* and only minor and insignificant changes were made for the final version. The sketch centres around a young couple who have just got married; he is a guardsman and she is a Débutante (Figure 15). To the dismay of her husband, she shouts out of the window to one woman, “Saucy cat! Go on, have another look and enjoy yourself”[[134]](#footnote-134) which is hardly the dignified behaviour that would be expected.

Figure 15: The guardsman and his wife (Edward Underdown and Doris Hare) as they wait for entry to Buckingham Palace.[[135]](#footnote-135)

The distance, socially, between the couple becomes further apparent after her husband asks her to be more dignified. Her response that “it’s all very fine for you, you’re used to it”[[136]](#footnote-136) is indicative of the lifestyle that the guardsman, and the upper classes in general, lead. In contrast, his wife had a career in the theatre and her father owned a pawnshop. In her number, she notes that “Fate’s made a fool of me rather, / It placed me where I shouldn’t be / And really couldn’t be by rights…”[[137]](#footnote-137) and this is the essence of the whole musical number.

Seeing the Débutante’s behaviour on stage would have been potentially uncomfortable for some of the upper-class, aristocratic audience members who would undoubtedly have perhaps preferred it if Coward had opted not to draw so much attention to the fact that not everyone in their inner circle was of the same ilk as them. The elitist attitude of the upper social classes would have meant that they would have found a job as a chorus girl degrading.

These three sketches have offered different perspectives on the social system in America during this period. In ‘Children of the Ritz’, Coward is showcasing the consumerist sentiment that had engulfed large swathes of the country and were now struggling in the midst of the Depression when they were forced to adjust to normal living again. ‘Midnight Matinee’ meanwhile, is an example of ladies who have perhaps risen up the social ladder and as such are trying to pretend that they have always been upper-class, whilst ‘Three White Feathers’ is the beginning of the journey.

In a diary entry from 1942, Coward comments how he feels that he fails to have a connection with the ‘workers’ and this is perhaps reflected in a comment that one of the women makes before the commencement of ‘Mad About the Boy’: “I go and sit there slavering over him like a half-witted kitchen-maid.”[[138]](#footnote-138) It is clear that she believes kitchen-maids are beneath her and so it could be argued that this is actually the “voice” of Coward himself, expressing his opinions through his work. For him, it is easier and more natural to mock the upper-classes and the social system as a whole.

There can be no doubt about it, I have no real rapport with the ‘workers’, in fact I actively detest them *en masse*. They grumble and strike and behave abominably while their very existence is made possible by sailors and merchant seamen who get a quarter or less than a quarter than what they do…[[139]](#footnote-139)

**Gender/Sexuality**

‘Mad About the Boy’ was significantly adapted for Broadway, not least with the inclusion of the Business Man’s refrain. The early script for *Set to Music* sees the Tart’s refrain replaced by one sung by the Business Man (Appendix 10) in which he declares his love for the movie star. Although it was cut for the final version of the show, its intended inclusion shows us that Coward was unafraid to reference homosexuality at a time of particular turmoil in New York City. Jennifer Terry discusses at length the backlash against homosexuality during the 1930s, arguing that it was at least partly fuelled by “social turmoil and public anxiety”[[140]](#footnote-140) stemming from 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression. Her further point of homosexuality already being regarded as “a sign of sickness and social degeneracy, [which] came to be associated with the reckless hedonism of the Roaring Twenties…”[[141]](#footnote-141) which was believed to be a cause of the Depression, highlights the additional social and political issues Coward was addressing.

Coward was staging the show in the midst of the turmoil. He was already addressing the social system, materialism and consumerism (all topical issues at the time) but in including these homosexual references, he was adding yet another dimension and one that was intertwined with the other issues. The removal of all references to the Business Man in the final script suggests that Coward perhaps considered the inclusion a step too far – an unnecessary extra on an otherwise simple sketch. Sheridan Morley states though, that it was the theatre management who instructed Coward not to include it, on account of it being too risqué.[[142]](#footnote-142) Whilst its inclusion would not have breached any censorship laws as it would have done in London, another adoring female would be more congenial. It is likely, therefore, that Coward opted for another female so that his significant messages were not being overshadowed.

**Race**

In several sketches, Coward attempts to highlight the plight and discrimination of African-Americans, particularly in the new sketches he wrote specifically for *Set to Music*. Whilst ‘Mad About the Boy’ looks at homosexuality, the inclusion of the ‘Colored Girl’ in the later script indicates that Coward was not afraid to comment on another contentious issue. With racial discrimination still not illegal during the 1930s, this led to further segregation between white and African-Americans. Helen Langa argues that “racist perceptions and inequities were deeply embedded in American society in the 1930s, and the idea of “racial difference” was accepted as self-evident.”[[143]](#footnote-143) It could be argued that Coward’s inclusion of a ‘Colored Girl’ singing of her love for the movie star was an attempt at highlighting similarities between the two cultures; ultimately, regardless of their race and segregation, they had more in common than they realised. She too is “mad about the boy” just as the other white American ladies are. On stage, if not beyond the theatre, there was unity as opposed to segregation. Just as there was shared fear due to the Depression, there were also shared emotions.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s had generated a new interest in black literature, which continued in the 1930s[[144]](#footnote-144) and so it was almost inevitable that Coward would make reference to racial issues enveloping America. Additionally, according to Allen Woll, “more black musicals and revues appeared in the early 1930s than at any time since the early 1920s.”[[145]](#footnote-145) Whilst he argues this was primarily for economic reasons, “most black revues focused primarily on musical talent instead of elaborate physical production…the shows resembled theatrical versions of nightclub acts with tryouts rarely needed…”[[146]](#footnote-146) These shows were still taking place and Coward would have wanted to be seen at the forefront of the musical development. This was an opportunity to capitalise on the form so he would not have been seen as out-of-touch whilst also drawing attention to the social and racial inequality that was taking place outside the theatre.

It was also important too as most of the successful musicals of the 1930s had been topical but also stylish – most notably Kaufman and Dietz’s *The Band Wagon*, *Of Thee I Sing* and *Our Town*. From the perspective of the revue form too, in ‘Mad About the Boy’, Coward had adapted a sketch for American audiences whilst also maintaining topicality and this can ultimately be said for the five sketches that were adapted from *Words and Music* for Broadway consumption. The rest of the show would be a compilation of new sketches written especially for Beatrice Lillie and *Set to Music*.

# **Chapter 4**

# **New Material for *Set to Music***

In total, nine new sketches (or eight if you exclude ‘The Stately Homes of England’ which had featured in Coward’s *Operette* (1938)) were written for *Set to Music* and this chapter will endeavour to examine them in sufficient detail so that we can see their significance to the revue as a whole. Not all of the sketches feature in both scripts (some were still to be written in the undated version, with only a cover page to indicate where they were to be situated) but where there are two completed versions, comparisons will be made and the impact of any revisions will be considered. For the purpose of this discussion, the new material will be analysed in the context of the following themes: Materialism, Race, Power of the Female, Romance and finally, Entertainment. In a broader context, the new material that was written specifically for *Set to Music* will highlight how Coward adapted his style and “Englishness” from his London revue *Words and* Music for Broadway.

**Materialism**

With the Great Depression and its repercussions still being felt at this time, materialism was arguably an inevitable topic. Coward is capitalising on an issue that would resonate with all the social classes: the lower-classes would see him highlighting the frivolous attitudes of the wealthy, whilst the upper-classes would see their own behaviour and attitude towards money and luxury items, which would hopefully inspire them to reflect on this and amend their ways.

‘Weary of It All’ is a prime example of such a sketch which highlights the unnecessary lavishness that is being deployed in certain circles. Set in the dressing room of Marion Day (“a famous cabaret star”), the scene description depicts the room as “filled with flowers and furnished luxuriously”[[147]](#footnote-147) and so immediately emphasis is placed on wealth. The ambience, along with her numerous suitors, creates the impression, even before meeting her, that this is a woman who expects lavish gifts even though she will not be grateful for them. Our impressions are not wrong either; as she is presented with each item in turn, she is critical of each one[[148]](#footnote-148) before sending them away as she wants to be left alone. When pressed on what is the matter and what is “making you [sic] so unhappy?”[[149]](#footnote-149) (“dreadfully unhappy” in the later script – for even stronger emphasis on Marion Day’s melancholy), she replies with just one word: Life. She explains herself further in the musical number that follows, but Coward has portrayed the message that no matter how much money you have or how many commodities you possess, none of it will necessarily guarantee happiness.

Marion has everything she could possibly want – success, a maid, several suitors, expensive jewellery – yet we see that she is still, fundamentally, not happy. It is a stark reminder, particularly prevalent in the USA at the time, of the two contrasting worlds between the rich and the poor. Few Americans would have been able to afford such a level of luxury, certainly during the 1930s, so the sketch can be read as a reminder of the times when things were not so bad, but also a message for the future – not to be greedy and to appreciate what you have. It is reflected in the musical number that follows at the end of the sketch, particularly in Patter’s verse (in the new key of Ab major) and the lines “Shopping without stopping till my senses swoon, / Or else some dreary matinee”[[150]](#footnote-150)

In addition to the sketch, the musical number is employed to emphasise the cavalier attitude towards the luxury life that is being enjoyed: the accompaniment also playing the melodic vocal line reinforces the “weariness” that is depicted in the lyrics (Figure 16).

Figure 136: The refrain in 'I'm So Weary of It All'.

The lyrics also mock the perceived “affliction” which befalls those fortunate to be in such a comfortable position:

Eight or nine,

I have to go and dine,

With this or that rich man about town,

Caviar and grouse

In an overheated house

God, how it gets me down![[151]](#footnote-151)

Phrases such as “have to”, ‘this or that” would have come across as being ungrateful in a period of time where millions of Americans were homeless and unemployed. For the audience watching this sketch on stage, Coward would arguably have been aiming to make them think about their own behaviour and predicament. Musically, all of this is reinforced by the repetitive chordal accompaniment and D in the melody line of the last line (Figure 17). The instruction that this is to be “in rhythm” depicts the monotony that Marian Day is feeling about her life and perceived chores.

Figure 17: The last line of the refrain in 'I'm So Weary of It All'.

Although writing for Broadway, Coward decided to include the number ‘The Stately Homes of England’ which he had written and used in *Operette*. As the title suggests, it is a very British number but nevertheless it serves the purpose of looking at the upper-classes from a different perspective – although they appear very rich, appearances can be deceptive. There is a strong satirical theme that runs throughout the number, yet it is clear that Coward is mocking this life in an affectionate manner. The quartet of four gentlemen sing of their upper-class education ahead of their ascension to their family title in the first verse with the acknowledgement that whilst they may appear to live the life of grandeur, even they are not immune from financial difficulty. This theme is continued in the refrain that follows, with the satirical note of the stately homes being little more than an image of wealth and superiority, yet they have to be “frequently mortgaged to the hilt.”[[152]](#footnote-152)

Incidentally, it is during the refrain and this subject matter, where the harmonies deviate most away from the tonic key of G. Surprisingly for an essentially comic number, ‘The Stately Homes of England’ does not remain in major keys throughout, with the refrain being an example of where this is the case. The mocking of the upper classes, “To prove the upper classes / Have still the upper hand” reinforces that, although on appearances the upper-classes appear superior, this is not always the case and having to maintain such lavish properties can be a tremendous financial hardship.

Figure 148: Musically, the harmonic progression reinforces Coward's message.

Aside from the D7 chord, the harmonic structure (see Figure 18) for these lines again features only minor chords, underlying the message that, whilst this is a comedy number and such lines are supposed to be humorous, the reality of their situation is still perfectly real.

Interestingly, the structure of ‘The Stately Homes of England’ differs in the two scripts of *Set to Music*.[[153]](#footnote-153) It features the same material as the earlier script, minus one verse and one refrain (which featured in Act Two – see Appendix 11) and it is in removing these that Coward removes some of the focus on patriotism, instead choosing to focus on the bigger message for American audiences. The line “we only keep them up for Americans to rent” is a particularly nice summary of the way that upper-class Englishness is performed for the benefit of international audiences.

In using these sketches and tackling this issue Coward was grappling, in essence, against mass-market production and a heightened consumer economy. Through the sketch ‘Weary of It All’ especially, he is highlighting what Cecil Smith and Glenn Litton describe as what had become “the norm”:

In this heightened consumer economy, instalment purchases became the norm, enabling ordinary Americans to purchase not just necessities but specialty goods too…With consumerism comes hype…Advertisements switched from extolling a product’s virtues to emphasising its effect on the buyer’s looks or status.[[154]](#footnote-154)

**Race**

In writing ‘Rug of Persia’ there is no doubt that Coward is addressing the issue of racism and the marginalisation of the black community in America at the time. The sketch, featuring a “small negro boy standing with a tray containing a ball of wool,”[[155]](#footnote-155) sees Coward explicitly highlighting the plight of African-Americans effectively being treated as slaves. Visually this notion is further reinforced again at the end of the sketch where the stage directions indicate that he is to follow Lillie’s character as she exits.

Using a Persian Harem, as opposed to a white American or any other nationality for that matter, displaces the problem of race, thereby enabling Coward to freely highlight their plight without being accused of racism or explicitly accusing white Americans of being inherently racist. Whilst it was probably clear to the audience what the message was, done through a comedy musical number[[156]](#footnote-156) and using a Persian Harem, any potential antagonisms that could have arisen from the sketch were dispelled. This would have enabled the audiences to watch and enjoy it with the message being implicitly visual rather than explicitly confronted on stage before their eyes.

The approach was typical of the one taken by Coward – using the art of subtlety rather than confrontation but it also fitted with the trend in theatre at the time. As John Bush Jones argues, “Along with the purely escapist musical comedy fluff and chin-up songs, New York offered a few lightly topical diversionary musicals…Topical in that they referenced current events or issues, but not satirical in that they did not comment or have a strong point of view on such matters.”[[157]](#footnote-157) With ‘Rug of Persia’, current issues were raised but without comment.

**The Power of the Female**

Another current topic at the time was the rise and increasingly important role of the woman. In the UK, Coward had witnessed the Suffragette Movement and women being allowed to vote on the same terms as their male counterparts in 1928. Similarly in the USA, women were also becoming a more dominant gender. During the 1930s, in many households women were the primary breadwinner as a result of the men losing their jobs after the Depression. It was during the Depression that they entered the workforce and politics in “increasing numbers,”[[158]](#footnote-158) subsequently taking “an active part in the New Deal.”[[159]](#footnote-159) This involved “the Women’s Division in the Democratic Party, headed by Molly Dewson,[[160]](#footnote-160) lobbying for women to receive key positions within the New Deal.”[[161]](#footnote-161)

Cultural mediums such as Hollywood responded in a contrary way. As Nick Smedley highlights: “Rather than embracing the changing definition of what constituted the life of the ordinary American woman, Hollywood made films that demonstrated the perils of women who chose careers over marriage.”[[162]](#footnote-162) Whilst there were, of course, exceptions to this attitude – most notably Ernst Lubitsch[[163]](#footnote-163) in films such as *Design for Living* (1933) and *Angel* (1937), where women were depicted positively, Smedley concludes that between the 1930s and 1930s, Hollywood “could at least be said to have reflected a widespread cultural opposition to female independence.”[[164]](#footnote-164)

Coward’s approach in his two specifically written sketches for *Set to Music* takes a more conciliatory tone. ‘A Fragonard Impression’ sees a Princess on the morning of her wedding suddenly dressed as a Valkyrie, thereby transforming her into a woman of power. Interspersed within the sketch is the musical number offering sentimentality and reflectiveness on the past. Love, life and romance are the three keys focal points of the sketch (and favourites of Coward). Interestingly though, the revised version of the sketch removes a lot of the sentimentality and this arguably removes the heightened contrast between the Marquise offering this perfect image of happiness and love against the final, unexpected moment of the sketch. Without this section, the mother-daughter relationship that is depicted is also lost:

Mother, tell us, mother,

If the dreams that you dreamed in Springtime

Have come true for you.

What Love promised to do for you.

Did it actually do?[[165]](#footnote-165)

We can see that in the revised version of the sketch, the focus has shifted towards empowering the Princess and generally making the Female much stronger, arguably much more associated with the New Woman. This is further reinforced by the removal of the following lyrics:

And youth is there,

The years hurry for young love is brief,

Tears follow with the fall of the leaf

Age may bring you sadly to grief[[166]](#footnote-166)

Any vulnerability has also now been removed too and this suggests that Coward was distancing himself from Hollywood’s mentality, instead opting to advocate female strength and independence.

Similarly, in ‘Secret Service’ female dominance is firmly at the forefront of the sketch. The two versions of the sketch differ, but the plot is effectively the same: as the title says, the Secret Service are trying to locate the Countess and two officers have been assigned with this task. As the Countess arrives at the venue (the Café International in Geneva or a restaurant at a railway station near the border, depending on the script), all the males are in awe of her. This does not go unnoticed by the Countess and in a line which was sure to get a laugh from the audience, particularly the female members, she proclaims, “You men are all alike – PIGS!”[[167]](#footnote-167)

The (so-called) manipulation of the officers is clear to see to the audience as it becomes apparent that the Countess is using her female charm to gain information from the Officers. She has a hidden agenda herself in wanting to know the location of the gun emplacements; manipulating the Officers’ “infatuations” as they flatter her with compliments. Coward cleverly scripts the scene so that they are none the wiser to the twist at the end. Even then the Countess is still trying to triumph and manipulate the Secret Service, despite clearly being defeated. Looking at the endings and the “twist”, then we can see that for the later script, Coward has reworked it slightly with the intent of it being more powerful and shocking. In the first script, the Countess shows a moment of weakness and almost concedes defeat as the script says she “places a hand on her heart”[[168]](#footnote-168), whereas in the later version, we can see that she is resolute in her determination not to acknowledge that she has lost. When she asks “Who are you”[[169]](#footnote-169), the change in punctuation creates a completely different image. The question mark, along with the stage instruction “whispering” implies that she is succumbing to her death and is genuinely momentarily perplexed by what has happened and who this person is. In contrast, the exclamation mark and “suddenly” in the stage instruction creates a sense of indignation and anger at being tricked. At this point, she is determined to control her fate, which is why she deliberately drinks the rest of the vial of poison. In doing so, Coward is portraying the gender as strong and not the weaker sex.

One final, minor addition to the ending of the sketch is the stage instruction for the 1st Officer on being asked who he is. In the first script he just says his name and title, suggesting that he does not move, but the revised script demonstrates his pride and authoritativeness that he has in his role by him “rising swiftly.”[[170]](#footnote-170) He wants the Countess to know exactly who he is and the power that he has, particularly as he is a member of the Secret Service. It is this organisation that the sketch is about. Coward himself undertook some secret service work during the war both in the UK and the USA and so he would have fully understood the importance of the work and all that it entailed. This is why, although it seemed as though the female characters had control over their male counterparts throughout the sketch and the twist at the end was unexpected, it was perhaps inevitable. Given the precarious situation in terms of war looming (the possibility had been muted ahead of *Set to Music* opening), it would have been inappropriate for Coward to have written a sketch that portrayed the Secret Service as being weak and susceptible to manipulation, let alone vastly indiscreet about such confidential issues as weaponry.

**Romance and Love**

So far, this chapter has focused on three key issues that were significant and topical in 1938/39. However, the emotional content also has to be present in a musical show – aspects such as humour, love, pathos and anger; *Set to Music* was no exception. Three sketches, ‘Madam Dines Alone’, ‘Never Again’ and ‘Weary of It All’ were written especially for this production and each one demonstrates love in its own way and the affect it can have.

The sketch ‘Madame Dines Alone’ (yet to be written in the undated script) is set in a dining room and featuring a little old lady, Mrs Illsworth-Poindexter (played by Beatrice Lillie), commencing at the point of her walking past an empty chair at the dining table. Replaying the fateful night in which she murdered her husband in a fit of rage and in a peak of jealousy and hysteria after being confronted with his adultery, she recalls the events leading up to the death of her husband. Although there is an empty chair which she starts addressing, no one would have expected this “fragile, beautiful little old lady of about eighty five”[[171]](#footnote-171) to be capable of murder and it is this act that provides a twist to an otherwise serene sketch of a little old lady.

The telephone call for her husband proves to be the catalyst for the events that subsequently unfold. Rather than a business acquaintance, it transpires that it is a lover on the telephone. Both his wife and the waiter know the truth but are tactful in not acknowledging it. The topic of adultery in the 1930s would have been taboo in the UK (hence Coward not writing the sketch for *Words and Music*), particularly on stage, leading to censorship in London by the Lord Chamberlain which was the case with one of Coward’s plays, *This Was A Man* in 1925. An argument ensues and “she strikes him repeatedly with her stick – then she sinks onto her knees beside him sobbing hysterically.”[[172]](#footnote-172) The killing of her husband is unintentional and not premeditated, highlighting the distress and repercussions of an affair to the audience. Her anger has not diminished though as she describes her husband as “the old bass---”[[173]](#footnote-173) to Withers when she tells him that his master is dead. However, the response of Withers, who enters upon being summoned, is interesting. “Very good Madam”[[174]](#footnote-174) is all that he says before the stage blacks out. The Broadway stage, unlike London, where values could be less traditional, was the ideal location for this sketch and is a further example of Coward adapting to writing for Broadway and American audiences, whilst still using humour in a sketch with serious undertones. Coward is also depicting a different aspect of romance – the consequences and how there is an element of sympathy for her actions.

‘Weary of it All’ looks at romance from a different perspective. The sketch has already been discussed from a materialist angle and that ties in with the romantic element too. Whereas Mrs Illsworth-Poindexter in ‘Madame Dines Alone’ acts the way she does because of her love for her husband, Marion Day is expecting her affection to be bought. Ultimately, she knows that this is not true affection or love, which is why she is so unhappy. The portrayal of love in these two contradictory sketches sees Coward describe the different meanings of love but also portrays the women as ultimately weak and vulnerable (in contrast to ‘Fragonard Impression’ and ‘Secret Service’ which showed their strength).

The sketch ‘Never Again’ meanwhile, lies somewhere in between’. Consisting of a musical number only, the theme is about never going back following a relationship break-up - there will be no more loss of self-control. Undoubtedly, it is an emotionally charged number, reflected in the harmonic structure. The line “My heart is free again” is perhaps the most effective line, etched with emotion, in the whole number – moving musically from Ddim7 to Bb7 (Figure 19).

Figure 19: "My heart is free again".

The later script features an extra verse as well as a repeat of the refrain. There is no music for the extra verse, but the lyrics feature He (French) asking She (Ortega) to reconsider their future and not to “take the risk of being just one more who misses love.”[[175]](#footnote-175) (See Appendix 12 for the full verse). Perhaps autobiographical, Vlasto and Farley certainly seem to think so: “There is little doubt in my mind that the subject is highly self-referential to the composer”[[176]](#footnote-176) Coward could be seen to be reflecting on his own relationships. The verse implores the audience to embrace their relationships for “There’s no great sin to it / Life’s pretty short my dear / Why not be caught my dear?”[[177]](#footnote-177) but is Coward still being implicitly cynical? On the subject of Ortega, he noted that she “evaded the worldly cynicism implicit in the lyric by the cunning device of singing it quite unintelligibly. Her voice, however, was very resonant.”[[178]](#footnote-178) This would suggest that he was, which changes the dimension of the number slightly. Now we can see ‘Never Again’ as Coward mocking the disillusioned, heart-broken lover for allowing himself to lose his self-control once again.

**Entertainment**

Not every sketch can fit into a category nor can an explanation be found as to why it was written – sometimes the reality is that it was written as a simple piece of entertainment. Likewise, on occasions, an interjection of humour in the midst of a serious topic can add another dimension and keeping the sketch firmly within the parameters of musical theatre. One such example in this instance would be in ‘Madame Dines Alone’. To ensure a light-hearted moment of comedy and to contrast with what is to come later in the sketch, the following interaction between the couple and the waiter Withers (Richard Hayden) would surely have drawn laughs from the audience:

Mrs. P: Withers and I have a little surprise for you to-night haven’t we Withers?

Withers: (With a sly smile, as he goes) We have indeed Madam.

Mrs. P: It’s a special treat – can you guess what it is? --- What? John how can you be so vulgar!

(She laughs helplessly and wipes her eyes)

You really are impossible John – I cannot imagine how I’ve put up with you for all these years.[[179]](#footnote-179)

With the audience not being able to hear her husband’s reply to his wife’s question, Coward leaves it to their imagination to decide on what the “vulgar” response was.

In the case of ‘I Went to a Marvellous Party’ and ‘Mr Carp’ however, their purpose was purely for entertainment. The former is a comedy number with the focus being entirely on the lyrics as opposed to the music, which simply provides the accompaniment and features no unusual harmonic settings or interesting musical figures. The Music Index describes the music as being “little more than a series of accompanying chords, no more than the least obtrusive of musical props, but all the same the accompanying harmonies have form, development and direction.”[[180]](#footnote-180) Minor revisions were made to this musical number. In the later script, Refrain 2 comes before the second verse. This is a new refrain that does not feature in the earlier script, where Lillie sings of having intense fun doing “what the people we know / Would be doing a hundred years hence.”[[181]](#footnote-181)[[182]](#footnote-182) Arguably one of the strongest comedic musical numbers in the revue, it should not be confused with ‘I’ve Been to a Marvellous Party’ [See Appendix 14].

Overall, this chapter gives us a greater understanding of what Coward had arguably sought to achieve with *Set to Music*. Alongside the key components of love and entertainment, he purposefully wrote new sketches that he knew would be particularly relevant to American audiences. Chapter 3 examined the sketches which he had adapted and endeavoured to make relevant, but these new sketches went further in achieving his aims. As Raymond Knapp puts it: “The most valuable dimension of American musicals is that they provide, permit and facilitate on a personal level”[[183]](#footnote-183) and *Set to Music* achieved this with emphasis on materialism, race and the power of the female. Additionally, Coward also interlinked them and we can see him trying to portray a balanced viewpoint on the issue. In regards to the racial prejudice for example, in ‘Mad About the Boy’ he had used the ‘Colored Girl’ from Harlem as an example of how racial differences did not mean that they did not share the same feelings, likes and dislikes as their white American counterparts. ‘Rug of Persia’, on the other hand, provided a reference to slavery.

Likewise, with the image of the strong woman, Coward showed both portrayals but was also not afraid to move against the general consensus at the time and in fact, as Smedley points out: “Preston Sturges[[184]](#footnote-184) too developed positive images of strong women who control events and manipulate weak men to achieve a (mutually satisfying) romantic outcome”[[185]](#footnote-185) citing *The Lady Eve* (1941), *The Palm Beach Story* (1942) and *The Miracle of Morgan’s Creek* (1943) as examples. Coward had a similar approach in the early script of ‘Secret Service’ in which the Officers were portrayed as weak and easy to manipulate, before this was rectified in the final version. Sturges work for Hollywood came after *Set to Music* and the subject matter was not so politically sensitive. He, unlike Coward, was not so restrained by current events.

The forthcoming chapter will look at the reception of the show. Up until this point, the focus has been on analysing the adaptation process of *Words and Music* to *Set to Music* and how Coward adapted sketches from the London show for Broadway. This chapter, meanwhile, focused entirely on the new sketches – many of which had been written specifically for Beatrice Lillie.

# **Chapter 5**

# **Critical Reception**

*“…a little thing Noël Coward ran up, but which some of the try-out observers ran down.”*[[186]](#footnote-186)

*Set to Music* was an opportunity to showcase Coward’s ability as a British composer and lyricist to adapt his writing for Broadway and American audiences and present a successful revue that is socially and politically satirical, whilst always ensuring that humour and light entertainment is at the forefront of every sketch. Previous chapters have already discussed this process of adapting *Words and Music* for Broadway, but this chapter will now examine the critical reception of *Set to Music* and how successful Coward had been in adapting a West End revue for Broadway. Firstly, we will look at the general comments on *Set to Music*, before examining more specific comments on the music and sketches, and Beatrice Lillie – the star of the show.

**General Comments about *Set to Music***

Overall, the critical reception was mixed. The acclaimed critic Brooks Atkinson, writing for the *New York Times* was highly enthusiastic about the show, claiming it “represents both of them [Coward and Lillie] at their best”[[187]](#footnote-187) and “on the spur of the moment it seems like the best show he has written.”[[188]](#footnote-188) He went on to note “this is not a full-bodied revue; it is not weighted down with material. It is the refinement of mannered gayety and it includes two satiric sketches of remarkable skill.”[[189]](#footnote-189) Arthur Pollock from the *Brooklyn Daily Early* was another to appreciate the piece, writing: “*Set to Music* is something a little new in revues by Noël Coward. This time it is not like other revues, a string of disconnected songs and sketches. The songs sometimes introduce the sketches or go on repeating their tunes with different characters to sing different words to them.”[[190]](#footnote-190)

Other critics, meanwhile, did not share such views. Burns Mantle of the *New York Daily News* acknowledged the successful partnership of Coward and Lillie, commenting how their “crowd absorbs entertainment eagerly, even ravenously. But its memory is short and its tongues are forked.”[[191]](#footnote-191) *Variety* magazine saw the revue as being “almost in ¾ time. It’s not quite a lazy waltz but borders on that in a number of spots, especially when Miss Lillie is absent.”[[192]](#footnote-192) The reviewer goes on to say that the success of the revue would be “more to the credit of the star rather than its creator.”[[193]](#footnote-193) Beatrice Lillie’s role in *Set to Music* does not go unnoticed in any of these reviews that have been uncovered thus far, with all of them uniting in their praise of her – something which will be covered in the later section on her.

Expectation also played a part in the mixed reviews. The 1920s had seen Coward as a man at the peak of his career and perhaps this level of expectation was simply too high for this 1939 revue. For Sidney. R. Whipple of the *New York World Telegram*, this was certainly the case:

It is a matter of deep and sincere regret to report that *Set to Music*, on which Broadway had built such dreams of high theatrical achievement, turns out to be – to this reviewer at least – a major disappointment…There is not in all this wide world a greater satirical comedienne than Beatrice Lillie. There are few theatrical minds keener and few wits sharper than those of Noël Coward. And the combination, in all logic, should be irresistible. Instead, the sum of those two good ingredients is nothing but a mediocre revue, enlivened now and then to a hilarious high by Miss Lillie’s antics.[[194]](#footnote-194)

Whipple judges the show to be mediocre, a view that is shared by John Cambridge in his review for the *Daily Worker New York*. In his discussion, he tried to offer an explanation for it:

The Season’s such a bore,

We haven’t had much excitement

Since the war[[195]](#footnote-195)

Cambridge believed that “in that couplet… is to be found the reason for the mediocrity of this latest work of Mayfair’s theatrical figure”[[196]](#footnote-196) yet he undermines his own criticism of the show by adding: “The mediocrity of *Set to Music* is glittering, expert and occasionally ingenious, but even the enormous talent of Beatrice Lillie cannot disguise the inferior quality of the revue. But the main comment on *Set to Music* must be a note of regret that Mr. Coward, who in his day has increased the canon on English comedy, should apparently have gone to seed.”[[197]](#footnote-197)

As a result of these general comments, we are already able to highlight several key issues and draw broad conclusions. The positive reviews seemingly fail to recognise or appreciate the satire or focus on topical issues through highlighting problems within society at the time. Meanwhile, the more critical reviews point to problems arising from Coward opting to re-use material from *Words and Music*, which consequently created a perception of “laziness” on his part. This was emphasised by Lillie’s absence in certain sketches and it was these that were deemed to be inferior. Any hint of Beatrice Lillie not giving her best performance, is put down to the quality of the material she had to work with.

**The Music and Sketches**

The critical reception of the music and sketches was mixed. Richard Watts Jnr, writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, offered one of the main and significant criticisms of both Coward and *Set to Music*, when he admonished the construction of the show: “[…] but on the whole it cannot be said that *Set to Music* reveals Mr Coward in one of his major achievements. In fact, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that he loafed a bit during its construction.”[[198]](#footnote-198) He also described the piece as “tired, brittle and strangely lacking in vitality, there is a curiously feeble and uninventive air about it, as though he were repeating himself until he, too, had grown bored with it all.”[[199]](#footnote-199) Conversely, for John Mason Brown of the *New York Post*, *Set to Music* showcased Coward as a “shrewd concoctor of skits who is fortunate in his star. He is also an adroit showman…Mr Coward has a good many other tricks up his sleeve.”[[200]](#footnote-200)

Atkinson, meanwhile, believed Coward had ““composed any number of withering melodies and laments for felicity with lyrics that represent perfection in their diction.”[[201]](#footnote-201) Focusing on specific sketches, in his opinion, “ridiculing the pompous gaucheries of a charity ball [‘Midnight Matinee’] and the mumbo-jumbo of international spying [‘Secret Service’] are in his best style of adroit fooling.”[[202]](#footnote-202) In a conflicting opinion, Richard Lockridge of the *New York Sun* felt the “liveliness that dancing gives is lacking and nothing quite comes off as it should. Except, of course, Miss Lillie.”[[203]](#footnote-203)

According to Sidney. R. Whipple, Lillie had “one sketch that is howlingly funny, one that is funny but over-long, one that is boring in the extreme, and several that might be above average for ordinary comediennes, but fall far below Miss Lillie’s normal standard.”[[204]](#footnote-204) Whilst Whipple did not name the sketches involved in this comment, as we examine others’ viewpoints on the mentioned sketches, by the end, we are perhaps in a position to be able to speculate as to which sketches belong under each category.

The sketch ‘Midnight Matinee’ was considered to be an “enormously funny number, not only because of the star’s comic wonderwork, but because Mr Coward has written and staged it with such relish”[[205]](#footnote-205) according to the *New York Herald Tribune*. Brown from the *New York Post* agreed, claiming “Mr Coward and Miss Lillie have never been funnier than they are in ‘Midnight Matinee’”[[206]](#footnote-206) before going so far as to say that “were there nothing else to make your attendance at the Music Box imperative (and there is plenty), this glorious spoofing of a pageant…would be enough to send you rushing to the box office.”[[207]](#footnote-207) This view was shared by Anderson, who believed it to be “the funniest sketch since Mr. Kaufman’s ‘The Still Alarm’ rocked these afters and broke, if I am not mistaken, these same ribs.”[[208]](#footnote-208)

It is perhaps the topic of ‘Midnight Matinee’ which appealed so much to the majority of critics – the idea that one mistake in a show can lead to an entire production becoming error-strewn. Coward’s success with this sketch, one of his new ones written specifically for *Set to Music* it must be noted, is evident with one critic describing it as being “far and away the most hilarious adaptation of the old amateur rehearsal idea that has been staged in years.”[[209]](#footnote-209) Not all of the critics approved of the sketch however, notably John Cambridge, who disapproved of what he perceived to be Coward’s attempt at seeking approval and laughs from the audience through inappropriate means: “It is to be observed that Mr Coward is not above seeking an anti-Semitic laugh by naming one of his young upper-class ladies ‘Miss Rebecca Masenthorpe’.”[[210]](#footnote-210)

‘The Stately Homes of England’ was another sketch which stood out for the critics – for positive reasons. “Among the marvels of modern music satire…stands in the front rank”[[211]](#footnote-211) was one description, as it “satirizes the bloods who thrive by selling this or that heirloom, as economic exigency demands.”[[212]](#footnote-212) For Walter Winchell of the *Daily Mirror New York*, the sketch was so good that it “appears wasted in *Set to Music*”[[213]](#footnote-213) with Coward having written “some of his most biting lyrics.”[[214]](#footnote-214) With an impassive response to other sketches, including ‘Three White Feathers’ which was deemed “only passable”[[215]](#footnote-215), the critics’ attentions focused on the sketches featuring Beatrice Lillie, singling ‘Weary of It All’ and ‘Secret Service’ out for specific mention. John Mason Brown acknowledged that with both ‘Weary of It All’ and ‘Secret Service’, Coward had provided Lillie and “her associates with some excellent recipes for the brewing of laughter”[[216]](#footnote-216) with the former sketch being described as a “masterpiece of comic acting”[[217]](#footnote-217)

Aside from ‘Midnight Matinee’ and ‘The Stately Homes of England’, the one other sketch that widely appealed to the critics in the reviews was ‘Mr Carp’. Richard Haydn’s ability to captivate the critics and audiences alike, with his act as a fish imitator which, according to Brooks Atkinson, “must now be enshrined in every theatregoer’s memory book”[[218]](#footnote-218) was considered a highlight of *Set to Music*. Once again, it was Brooks Atkinson who was particularly enthusiastic:

In a make-up that the Moscow Art Theatre would approve, he appears as Edwin Carp, the phenomenal fish mimic in some demented vaudeville program… It was something to have written the long introduction that caricatures the hackneyed literary effusions of dull people, and it is great to be able to master the accent and style of Mr Haydn’s delivery.[[219]](#footnote-219)

Atkinson was not alone in his praise. In a revue in which Coward’s ability to entertain was seemingly questioned, ‘Mr Carp’ is an example of one sketch which did not come under such scrutiny: “Mr Haydn, the fish imitator, actually achieves the feat of giving us something fresh in the way of comedy. There is the touch of an English Benchley about his work if you can imagine such a thing, but there is certainly nothing in the way of imitation that he offers.”[[220]](#footnote-220)

The personal criticisms of Coward translate into his music and sketches too. It would seem the reception was, largely, one of disappointment with a feeling that Coward had struggled with this revue: “As for the rest of the program, it would seem that Mr Coward, having exhausted his own mentality and Miss Lillie’s physical strength, looked at his watch and said, ‘Well, we need forty-five minutes more of something – anything.”[[221]](#footnote-221) Considering this last “forty-five minutes” consisted of ‘Secret Service’ and ‘Mr Carp’, not to mention ‘The Party’s Over Now’ (used extensively as the closing number by Coward in his cabaret performances, notably his Café de Paris ones), the comment by Whipple might be considered unjustified. Whilst others are not so forthright with their views, there is a consensus that *Set to Music* did become repetitive. Richard Lockridge, John Mason and John Anderson for example, all concurred that Coward’s music “may not be memorable, save for a melody or two”[[222]](#footnote-222) and was “generally reminiscent”[[223]](#footnote-223) with “the air of Mr Coward strumming at the piano.”[[224]](#footnote-224)

It must be noted, however, that Walter Winchell of the *Daily Mirror New York* held a contrasting view to Whipple – the former believed the second act to be better than the first:

The first act finale is next, at which the first audience rocked from spasms of laughter. It is one of the funniest treats the theatre has ever enjoyed. It is worth the price of admission. The second section is better. Perhaps because three of the funnier offerings are bunched together – one after the other.”[[225]](#footnote-225)

After looking at the general comments made about the show and the criticism of Coward, both personally and towards his music and sketches, it is possible to begin to reaffirm the conclusion already drawn that the adapted sketches for Broadway were flawed and were failing to capture the excitement of the critics. One reason for this could simply be that they did not star Beatrice Lillie because, as we now look at her reception we realise, if not already, that she was far from the problem.

**Beatrice Lillie**

One phrase probably sums up all of the uncovered reviews on Beatrice Lillie: ‘Lillie’s Revue.’[[226]](#footnote-226) Lillie appears in nine of the nineteen sketches in *Set to Music*, quite a number and one which did not go unnoticed. Watts Jnr acknowledged how “usually Mr Coward is the most important personage in his own works, whether he appears in them or not…”[[227]](#footnote-227) but in this case, “the entire evening is decidedly Miss Lillie’s.”[[228]](#footnote-228) In Chapter 1, there was the discussion based on the press announcement for *Set to Music*, regarding whether Coward wrote the revue specifically for Lillie or not. Whilst a definitive answer cannot, as of yet, be provided, the critics certainly believed so. We have already seen Atkinson’s thoughts, with Lockridge and Mason Brown concurring and they both felt she performed with aplomb.

Noël [sic] Coward wrote her show, and called it *Set to Music*, but it is Miss Lillie’s private and particular property from the glad moment of her entrance, side-saddled on a white horse, until the gloomier one of her exit to the lyric assurance that the party’s over now. The party’s over when she leaves, all right.”[[229]](#footnote-229)

John Mason Brown, despite his ambivalent positivity regarding *Set to Music* at times in his review, lavished praise on Lillie:

If Miss Lillie is kept busy at the Music Box, that is every playgoer’s good fortune. She has never been seen to better advantage than she is in this new and giddy revue which Mr Coward has fashioned for her. From her first uproarious entrance on a white horse as a Valkyrie in a Fragonard boudoir to her final chirps about a MARvelous [sic] party, she is in super-topnotch form…she is at her incomparable best. And what a best it is![[230]](#footnote-230)

Strikingly, on the whole, Coward was implicitly praised whilst the critics received Lillie so warmly. For example, Brown also highlighted how “not only does she [Lillie] have on the whole far better materials to work with than she has had of late, but there is a new depth, or if you will, a new joyful acidity to her comment…In each number she manages to draw the cartoon Mr Coward has suggested and become a living character in it”[[231]](#footnote-231) with Winchell similarly agreeing: “The songs in which Mr Coward has endowed the star certainly are the best she has had in a long time. Almost every moment she is on view is hilarious.”[[232]](#footnote-232) These comments show that other remarks labelling Coward to be “lazy” and “lacking vitality” are unjustified given his success in writing such material for Beatrice Lillie. It would almost seem as though there were a differentiation between those sketches for Lillie and those written for the rest of the cast. Maybe now we are getting to the crux of the matter.

Additionally, Lillie’s contribution to *Set to Music* was deemed so strong that, “to say that the show without her would be nothing, is to go off into the most fantastic realms of pure theory, as *Set to Music* most certainly isn’t and couldn’t be without her.”[[233]](#footnote-233) Meanwhile in his review, Anderson announced “there is not cause for alarm, since Miss Lillie is on the stage most of the time, and she is the funniest show on the local ticket racks…she is the heart, soul and funny bone of it and she makes it a show that is not to be missed by any playgoer with sense or non-sense. She is the best of the lady clowns, and most of her best – but placed the blame firmly with Coward. Whilst Cambridge saw Lillie “in her most splendidly hard and amusing form”[[234]](#footnote-234) who would be “chiefly responsible for whatever merit there is in the sketches”[[235]](#footnote-235), Whipple was adamant “Mr Coward ain’t [sic] done right by our little Bea.”[[236]](#footnote-236)

Overall, this chapter has presented us with recurring themes: the critics were largely unimpressed by Coward’s decision to re-use material from *Words and Music*, they failed to recognise the topical themes in the show, dismissing the revue as merely being entertainment and nothing more and finally, Beatrice Lillie was the “star” of the show. Moreover, we can assert that these themes are also interlinked with one another. Additionally, another broader theme to emerge from this chapter is the level of expectation which surrounded the revue and which partly stems from Coward’s “trademark” and “Noël Coward style”.

Adapting a show for Broadway and thus creating a new one arguably has the potential to be a problematic scenario. In re-using material from *Words and Music*, the issue of Coward’s perceived “laziness” is compounded. However, Coward’s “trademark” is seemingly equally as problematic. The contrasting views on this issue suggests that *Set to Music*, to some, was not frivolous enough and not in the typical “Noël Coward style”. If this thread of thought is followed through, then this arguably means, to a certain extent at least, that Coward can be seen to have successfully addressed some of the hard-hitting topics that he had endeavoured to do. Ostensibly, Coward’s “trademark” and the level of expectation that came with a Noël Coward show, was one of the fundamental problems; the other being the inclusion of material from *Words and Music* rather than the new material written.

# **Conclusion**

In writing *Set to Music*, Coward was not only writing a musical revue for Broadway and providing entertainment, but he was also addressing social issues. Aside from this, *Set to Music* is also significant for being a series of firsts: Coward’s first musical adaptation, his first solo Broadway revue and his first show without Cochran. Consequently, one might argue that this was an ambitious task to undertake and therefore problems were perhaps somewhat inevitable.

*Words and Music* had also been a first for Coward, as the 1932 show was the first in which he had full control – he directed and wrote the entire show – and so opting to adapt this revue could be seen as an obvious choice. Its critical reception was largely positive and admiring, with the show running for 164 performances. Whilst this does not mean the show should be considered a flop, as this is a respectable number for shows during this time, it was fewer than Coward had hoped for. In many ways, *Set to Music* is therefore not only an adaptation, but also an attempt to correct his perceived mistakes with a show that seemingly had a lot of promise.

This study has charted the revue from its genesis through to its critical reception; in other words, its complete journey, with each chapter building on the previous one. From the outset, it seems that one of the main issues was Beatrice Lillie and to what extent it was going to be the ‘Beatrice Lillie show’. The Press Announcement was referenced earlier (for convenience, also see Appendix 15) and it clearly suggests the show is a vehicle for her – Wilson would “present” Lillie in this new show, new sketches would feature her and Lillie’s “supporting cast” would be recruited. Such a show would not have been unusual – as Andrew Lamb generalised, shows during the 1920s/30s “were often little more than vehicles for individual stars with contrived boy-meets-girl situations and happy endings, songs that were for the most part just catchy tunes with lyrics tagged on and occasional “production numbers”.”[[237]](#footnote-237)

In trying to correct the mistake of having no “star” in *Words and Music*, Coward had the dilemma of how to incorporate his American star into his revue. Beatrice Lillie was the obvious choice for the role – they had worked and starred together before in the New York production of *This Year of Grace* but Lillie had captured Coward’s attention when he first saw her in *Cheep!* :

Miss Lillie, with her high piled auburn hair and a green satin evening gown from the bosom of which protruded a long stemmed chrysanthemum, will stay in my memory forever. She sang, in a piercing soprano, a popular ballad called ‘Bird of Love Divine’, she sang this with apparently the utmost sincerity, but it did just occur to her during the second verse to prop her music up against the chrysanthemum. I believe I was still laughing hours later.[[238]](#footnote-238)

James Moore argues that she was the critics’ “darling”[[239]](#footnote-239) before co-starring with Coward and that, in retrospect, it is clear that “American authors now contended to provide her with the highly literate kind of material she so ably handled in the intimate British revues.”[[240]](#footnote-240) With this in mind, it is questionable if Lillie was utilised enough or too much, with Brooks Atkinson’s review headline being: “Beatrice Lillie in Noël Coward’s *Set to Music* With an English Accent”[[241]](#footnote-241). During the course of the adaptation process, although sketches were modified for this new production, the changes were not so drastic that they starred Beatrice Lillie – her starring role was in the new sketches which had been written for her.

It would be inaccurate to identify Beatrice Lillie and her involvement as the sole problem; indeed, other factors must also be taken into account. The critics approached the revue as two separate shows: *Words and Music* on Broadway and new sketches for Lillie, as opposed to seeing *Set to Music* as one whole show. Coward’s perceived “laziness” in re-using sketches, albeit adapted, suggests that the critics felt detached from these sketches; that they were still not connected enough to the USA and issues that were important to them. Whilst Brooks Atkinson was enthusiastic about the revue, he acknowledged *Set to Music* as the “London revue.”[[242]](#footnote-242) (before adding “…Lillie revue comes closer to the mark.”) As the drama critic John Mason Brown commented in 1938, “There are now a great many things to be thought about in our musical. They no longer permit us to be pleasantly relaxed. They demand us to be jubilantly alert. Our laughter at them is the surest proof that we are thinking.”[[243]](#footnote-243) *Set to Music* followed revues such as *Pins and Needles*[[244]](#footnote-244)*,* which is a perfect example; it made people laugh and got them to think. *Set to Music* was unable to resonate with audiences or critics in quite the same way.

The reception of *Hellzapoppin* must also be taken into account when considering the mediocre reception of *Set to Music* by some. Brooks Atkinson’s *Hellzapoppin* review describes the opposite of Coward’s revue or anything else that he had written or starred in:

Anything goes in *Hellzapoppin* – noise, vulgarity, practical joking – and about every third number is foolish enough for guffawing…

Probably the entertainment ought to show a higher trace of talent. The taste of *Hellzapoppin* runs to second rate vaudeville turns, with chorus dancing of no particular consequence and some artful warbling by a pair of damsels sweetly billed as ‘The Starlings’...

But this is mainly a helter-skelter assembly of low-comedy gags to an ear-splitting sound accompaniment – some of it ugly, all of it fast.[[245]](#footnote-245)

Although the tone of shows on Broadway had become more restrained after *Hellzapoppin*, there was still a level of expectation there, but a Noël Coward revue was never going to be in the same style of *Hellzapoppin* or *Scandals*. That was simply not Noël Coward who, by this point in his career, was becoming the “epitome of Englishness.” Sketches such as ‘Three White Feathers’ which sees a girl describe her ascension up the social leader, and ‘Weary of it All’ which highlights how money and fame does not always buy happiness, are not as degrading as those seen in *Scandals* for example. Writing “bathroom humour” or having chorus girls sitting on audience members’ laps would have been abhorrent to him; he was, after all, creating the image of the sophisticated, quintessential English gentleman and audiences would therefore have known that his revues would not have been like *Hellzapoppin* or *Scandals*. In essence, the “Noël Coward trademark” was firmly in place here.

Coward’s “trademark style” and how this is reflected in his works (both musical and dramatic) is a different topic entirely, but the critical reception of *Set to Music* indicates that it was problematic in this show. However, the contrasting views on the issue highlights how *Set to Music*, to some, was not frivolous enough and not in the typical “Noël Coward style.” If this thread of thought is followed through, then this arguably means, to a certain extent at least, that Coward can be seen to have successfully addressed some of the hard-hitting topics that he had endeavoured to do.

To conclude, these problems can be attributed to the level of expectation which surrounded the revue – the idea of a Noël Coward revue, starring Beatrice Lillie and following on from *Hellzapoppin* must have been palpable and, as such, it can be argued that no show was ever going to be able to realistically match this level of expectation and pique the interests of audiences and critics in the long-term. Compounding all of this was Coward’s first attempt at adapting a show specifically for Broadway and it was not a flop. Whilst the show ran for only 129 performances, fewer than *Words and Music* and less than Coward had hoped for, it was not an embarrassing number considering the economic turmoil which it opened in. He targeted significant social and economic problems in an intimate style – one in which he offered his opinion on what he was witnessing and encouraged the audiences to reflect on their own lives as a result of what they were seeing being played out before them.

On a broader level and in terms of scholarship on Coward and his musicals, *Set to Music* is a significant revue, particularly as it was a first on several aspects and at a time when the revue genre was also evolving. This is the first time that a Noël Coward musical adaptation has been discussed and *Set to Music* is an interesting point in which to begin the process of examining his musical works. The 1939 revue is different in that, star pressure and commercial interests would normally have meant that popular songs were continually interpolated into musicals. However, with *Set to Music*, Americans were introduced to popular numbers such as ‘Mad About the Boy’ and ‘The Party’s Over Now’ – key numbers that were to feature prominently in Coward’s successful cabaret career.

Additionally, this study bridges the gap between the early musical revues and the post-war musicals; it has furthered research on revues which is a marginalised genre in terms of literature on them. As a whole, Coward’s musical theatre output is largely forgotten about. One reason for this is his works do not fit perfectly into one category and this leads to the undervaluing of the output. Just because this is the case, it does not justify his five decades of musical theatre being overlooked; *Set to Music* proves that his work is worthy of discussion. Whilst Coward himself was somewhat dismissive of his revue work, Moore points out how fundamental Coward was in the Intimate revue and to the American revue during the peak Beatrice Lillie years:

Although Charlot’s physical presence was unnecessary to the remodelling of American revue, it is hard to imagine the process without Lillie and, on a more occasional basis, Noël Coward.[[246]](#footnote-246)

Coward was a dominant force within the genre of revue from the 1920s. Moore goes as far as to say that “Lillie, Lawrence, Buchanan and Coward were a kind of culmination – they created an image of revue performance that others copied for the succeeding decades.”[[247]](#footnote-247) In writing *Set to Music*, Coward adapted his work specifically for an American audience, whilst simultaneously continuing the development and maturity of the intimate revue.

# **Appendix 1**

**Noël Coward on Revues**

“The art of revue writing is acknowledged by those unfortunates who have had anything to do with as being a very tricky and technical business. Everything has to be condensed to an appalling brevity. The biggest laugh must be on the last line before the black out. No scene or number should play for more than a few minutes at most, and, above all, the audience must never be kept waiting…

The lessons which have to be learned by aspiring revue writers are many and bitter. The bitterest really being the eternal bugbear of ‘running order’… and, however carefully the author may have planned it originally, this sequence is generally completely changed by the time the show reaches dress rehearsal … Another problem… is the successful handling of danger spots. The principal danger spots in Revue are (1) The opening of the whole show, which must be original and extremely snappy. (2) The sketch immediately following it, which must so convulse the audience that they are warmed up enough to overlook a few slightly weaker items. (3) The finale of the first half. This should essentially be the high spot of the evening so that on the first night the bulk of the audience and the critics can retire to the bars (if not already there) and, glowing with enthusiasm, can drink themselves into an alcoholic stupor for the second half. The fourth danger spot is the strong low-comedy scene, which should be placed as near as possible to the second-half finale and should be strong, low, and very comic indeed.”[[248]](#footnote-248)

# **Appendix 2**

**Noël Coward on Revues (1971)**

“Writing for revue is a difficult, delicate art, as is directing revue and both these arts seem, in 1971, almost to be lost. A sketch for a revue must be quick, sharp, funny (or sentimental) and to the point, with a good, really good black-out line. Whether the performers are naked or wearing crinolines is quite beside the point; the same rule applies…

I first learned about the bugbear, Running Order, that endlessly fascinating and always essential aspect of revue, from Andre Charlot when I appeared in and wrote much of the material for *London Calling* in 1923. He would have the names of all the numbers in the revue printed on separate cards, place them on his desk and then, as though playing Patience, juggle with them and go on moving them about, shifting them again and again until he was satisfied that they were in the right running order. The finale of the first half would already have been agreed upon but all the numbers leading up to it had to build, and build to the number *before* the finale and that number, whatever it was, had to be sure-fire. The second number in the second half was, still is, and always will be, terribly important. It has to be so strong, or so funny, or so spectacular or whatever, that the audience, including by then the stragglers from the bar, will settle back comfortably in their seats, happy in the knowledge that the second half is going to be even more brilliant than the first.”[[249]](#footnote-249)

# **Appendix 3**

“I believe that the great public by which I’ve lived all these years should not be despised or patronized or forced to accept esoteric ideas in the theatre in the name of culture or social problems or what not. I’m sick of the assumption that plays are “important” only if they deal with some extremely urgent current problem.

Problems? We live with them all day, every day, all our lives. Do we have to have them in the theatre every night, too? I was brought up in the belief that the theatre is primarily a place of entertainment.

The audience wants to laugh or cry or be amused. Swift entertainment – not strange allegories.”[[250]](#footnote-250)

# **Appendix 4[[251]](#footnote-251)**

**The success of *The Ziegfeld Follies***

1. The nation was a youthful republic hungry for influence and recognition – populated by a people reaching for status and sophistication.

* It provided a means of expressing patriotism by frequent scenes and songs celebrating military might.

1. Justified wealth and status by extolling clothes, cars and consumer goods as desirable commodities.
2. Fostered sophistication by extolling knowledge of the arts, travel to exotic lands and the ability to entertain beautiful women.
3. Provided an atmosphere of sensuality coupled with innocence by displaying women in varying stages of undress but had them assume an aloof demeanour.
4. Provided fantasy opportunities for both men and women by portraying women in roles varying from goddess to whore.

# **Appendix 5**

This table outlines the running order for *Set to Music* at various dates. At present, there are only two scripts available, one of which is undated and the other one is dated 13 February. The scripts[[252]](#footnote-252) are:

* GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6 *Set to Music* typescript [79 pages]
* GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9 *Set to Music* typescript [157 pages] Property plot and annotated script

Although there are no scripts for the other dates, the running orders are located within the Property Plot in GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Script**  **(Undated)**  **GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6** | **New York**  **(Undated)** | **4 February** | **4 February**  **Act 2 Revised**  **(Handwritten)** | **9 February** | **13 Feb - Eve**  **GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9** |
| **Act 1** | **Act 1** | **Act 1** |  | **Act 1** | **Act 1** |
| Fragonard | Fragonard | Fragonard |  | Fragonard | Fragonard |
| Debutantes | Debutantes | Debutantes |  | Debutantes | Debutantes |
| Fairy Whispers | Mad About the Boy   * Cinema * Society * Pantry * Harlem * School Girl (Miss Lillie | Mad About the Boy   * ~~Cinema~~ * Society * Pantry * Harlem * School Girl (Miss Lillie) |  | Mad About the Boy   * Cinema * Society * Pantry * Harlem * School Girl (Miss Lillie) | Mad About the Boy   * Society * Pantry * Harlem * School Girl (Miss Lillie) |
| Children of the Ritz | Stately Homes | Pastimes   * Tennis * Bridge |  | Pastimes   * Tennis * Bridge | Pastimes   * Tennis * Bridge |
| Mad About the Boy   * Society Woman * School Girl * Cockney Maid * Business Man | Weary of it All | Weary of it All |  | Weary of it All | Weary of it All |
| Stately Homes | Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz |  | Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz |
| Marvellous Party | Madame Dines Alone | Madame Dines Alone |  | Madame Dines Alone | Madame Dines Alone |
| Never Again | Never Again | Never Again |  | Never Again | Never Again |
| Madame Dines Alone | Midnight Matinee | Midnight Matinee |  | Midnight Matinee | Midnight Matinee |
| Midnight Matinee |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Act 2** | **Act 2** | **Act 2** | **Act 2** | **Act 2** | **Act 2** |
| Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz | Children of the Ritz |
| Three White Feathers | Three White Feathers | Three White Feathers | Three White Feathers | Three White Feathers | Three White Feathers |
| Debutantes | Mr. Carp | Mr. Carp | Debutantes | Debutantes | Debutantes |
| Rug of Persia | Debutantes | Rug of Persia | Secret Service | Secret Service | Secret Service |
| Stately Homes | Marvellous Party | Stately Homes | Stately Homes | Stately Homes | Stately Homes |
| Weary of it All | Stately Homes | Secret Service | Marvellous Party | Rug of Persia | Marvellous Party |
| Mr. Carp | Secret Service | Debutantes | Mr. Carp | Mr. Carp | Mr. Carp |
| Secret Service | Debutantes | Marvellous Party | Rug of Persia | Marvellous Party | Rug of Persia |
| Debutantes | The Party’s Over Now | The Party’s Over Now | Debutantes | The Party’s Over Now | The Party’s Over Now |
| Party’s Over Now |  |  | The Party’s Over Now |  |  |

# **Appendix 6**

This table provides an outline for Act 1 of the *Set to Music* undated script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scene** | **Sketch** | **Characters** | **Song/Dance** |
| 1 | A Fragonard Impression | A young singer, Lisette, Tiger Plon Plon, La Marquise De Sauriole, Monsieur l’Abbe, Blanche & Germaine |  |
| 2 | Débutantes | 3 Coloured Girls | ‘Débutantes’ |
| 3 | Fairy Whispers | Narrator, Betty, Fairy, Singer &  Roger |  |
| 4 | Children of the Ritz | Show Girls |  |
| 5 | Mad About the Boy | Society Woman, Her Friend, School Girl, Her Younger Sister, Servant Girl, Business Man & Secretary | ‘Mad About the Boy’ |
| 6 | Stately Homes |  | ‘Stately Homes of England’ |
| 7 | Marvellous Party |  | ‘Marvellous Party’ |
| 8 | Never Again | Off Stage: Dancer, Show Girls & Men | ‘Never Again’ |
| 9 | Madame Dines Alone |  |  |
| 10 | Midnight Matinee | Viscountess Hogan, Lady Millicent Headley, The Marchioness of Lemworth, The Hon. Mrs. Douglas Draycott, Miss Esme Ponting, Miss Spence, The Lady & Mrs. F. N. J. Wilson.  Scene Characters:  The Marchioness of Lemworth – Nell Gwynn  The Hon. Mrs. Douglas Draycott – Salome  Miss Esme Ponting – Marie Antoinette  Lady Eleanour Sherrel – Court Lady – ~~Helen Bennett~~ Ann Graham  Miss Rebecca Mosenthorpe – Court Lady – Laurie Douglas  Lady Patricia Gainton – Little Page [child]  The Hon. Julian Forrage – Little Page [child]  Miss Spence – Joan of Arc  The Lady Westmorsham – Lady Godiva  Mrs. F. N. J. Wilson – (Announcer) Lady Blessington  Mr. Stuart Ingleby – Richard Haydn  2 Angels – Mary Ann Carr |  |

# **Appendix 7**

This table provides an outline for Act 1 of the *Set to Music* script dated 13 February, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F-7-8-9.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scene** | **Sketch** | **Characters** | **Song/Dance** |
| 1 | A Fragonard Impression | 24 principals  A Young Singer, Lisette, Tiger Plon Plon, La Marquise De Sauriole, Monsieur l’Abbe, Blanche, Germaine, Eugenie & Giselle |  |
| 2 | Débutantes | 3 Colored Girls | ‘Débutantes’ |
| 3 | Mad About the Boy | Society Woman, Her Friend, Servant Girl, Colored Girl, School Girl & Her Younger Sister | ‘Mad About the Boy’ |
| 4 | Our British Pastimes by Herbert Farjeon |  |  |
| 5 | Weary of it All | Lord Bitchette, Daisy, a dresser, Elmer Von Robespierre, Henry Beardworth & Marion Day | ‘So Weary of it All’ |
| 6 | Children of the Ritz | Show Girls | ‘Children of the Ritz’ |
| 7 | Madame Dines Alone | Mrs Joan Illsworth-Poindexter & Withers |  |
| 8 | Never Again | Singers and dancers off-stage | ‘Never Again’ |
| 9 | Midnight Matinee | Viscountess Hogan, Lady Millicent Headley,  The Marchioness of Lemworth, The Hon. Mrs. Douglas Draycott, Miss Esme Ponting, Miss Spence, The Lady Westmorsham & Mrs. F. N. J. Wilson.  Character List  Mrs. Rowntree (Organiser) – Beatrice Lillie  Viscountess Hogan – Diane de Poitiers  Lady Millicent Headley – Cleopatra  The Marchioness of Lemworth – Nell Gwynn  The Hon. Mrs. Douglas Draycott – Salome  Miss Esme Ponting – Marie Antoinette  Lady Eleanour Sherrel – Court Lady – ~~Helen Bennett~~ Ann Graham  Miss Rebecca Mosenthorpe – Court Lady – Laurie Douglas  Lady Patricia Gainton – Little Page [child]  The Hon. Julian Forrage – Little Page [child]  Miss Spence – Joan of Arc  The Lady Westmorsham – Lady Godiva  Mrs. F. N. J. Wilson – (Announcer) Lady Blessington  Mr. Stuart Ingleby – Richard Haydn  ~~2 Angels – Mary Ann Carr~~ |  |

# **Appendix 8**

This table provides an outline for Act 2 of the *Set to Music* undated script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scene** | **Sketch** | **Characters** | **Song/Dance** |
| 1 | Children of the Ritz | Show Girls |  |
| 2 | Three White Feathers | He & She | ‘Three White Feathers’ |
| 3 | Débutantes | 3 Coloured Girls | ‘Débutantes’ |
| 4 | Rug of Persia |  |  |
| 5 | Stately Homes [2] | 4 un-named characters | ‘The Stately Homes of England’ |
| 6 | Weary of it All | Lord Bitchette, Daisy, a dresser, Elmer Von Robespierre, Henry Beardworth & Marion Day | ‘So Weary of it All’ |
| 7 | Mr Carp | Edwin Carp |  |
| 8 | Secret Service | The Countess, Madame Moule, Zizi, Leopold Rosen, 1st Officer, 2nd Officer, Maurice, Cello Player, Fritz, Serge & Ivan  3 extras at a table  Other Guests, etc. |  |
| 9 | Débutantes  (Prelude to Finale) | Colored Girls | ‘Débutantes’ |
| 10 | Finale | Young Girl, Young Man, Hostess, Leonora, Lady Skeffington & Lord Skeffington  Full Company | ‘The Party’s Over Now’ |

# **Appendix 9**

This table provides an outline for Act 2 of the *Set to Music* annotated script dated 13 February, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F-7-8-9.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scene** | **Sketch** | **Characters** | **Song/Dance** |
| 1 | Children of the Ritz | Show Girls | ‘Children of the Ritz’ |
| 2 | Three White Feathers | He & She | ‘Three White Feathers’ |
| 3 | Débutantes | 3 Colored Girls | ‘Débutantes’ |
| 4 | Secret Service | The Countess, Madame Moule, Zizi, Leopold Rosen, 1st Officer, 2nd Officer, Maurice, Cello Player, Pritz, Serge & Ivan  3 Extras at an extra table  Other Guests, etc. |  |
| 5 | The Stately Homes of England | Quartet of 4 men | ‘The Stately Homes of England’ |
| 6 | Marvellous Party | Un-named character portrayed by Beatrice Lillie | ‘Marvellous Party’ |
| 7 | Mr Carp | Edwin Carp |  |
| 8 | Rug of Persia | Marsinah, 7 wives, 4 eunuchs & 1 colored boy | ‘Rug of Persia’ |
| 9 | Finale | Young Girl, Hostess & [handwritten onto list] Miss Lillie  Full Company | ‘The Party’s Over Now’ |

# **Appendix 10**

**Refrain sung by the Business Man**

‘Mad about the boy

I know it’s silly

But I’m mad about the boy

And even Doctor Freund cannot explain

Those vexing dreams

I’ve had about the boy.

When I told my wife

She said

‘I never heard such nonsense in my life!’

Her lack of sympathy

Embarrassed me

And made me frankly glad about the boy.

My doctor can’t advise me

He’d help me if he could

Three times he’s tried to psychoanalyse me

But it’s just no good

People I employ

Have the impertinence

To call me Myrna Loy

I rise above it

Frankly love it

‘Cos I’m absolutely

MAD ABOUT THE BOY!’[[253]](#footnote-253)

# **Appendix 11: The additional verse and refrain in ‘The Stately Homes of England’**

**Verse**

Lord Elderly, Lord Borrowmere,

Lord Sickert and Lord Camp,

Behold us in our hours of ease

Uncertain, coy and hard to please.

Reading in Debrett of us

This fine Patrician quartette [sic] of us

We can feel extremely proud

Our ancient lineage we can trace

Back to the cradle of the Race

Before those beastly Roman bowmen

Bitched our local Yoemen.

Tho’ the new democracy

May pain the old Aristocracy

We’ve not wined nor cried aloud

Under the bludgeonings of chance what will be will be

Our heads will still be –

Bloody but quite unbowed!

**Refrain**

The Stately Homes of England

In valley, dale and glen

Produce young men

Tho’ our mental equipment may be slight

And we barely distinguish left from right

We are quite prepar’d to fight for our principles

Tho’ none of us know so far

What they really are –

Our duty to the Nation

It’s only fair to state

Lies not in procreation

But what we procreate

And so we can cry

With kindling eye

As to married life we go

What ho! for the Stately Homes of England!

For the purpose of looking at this musical number, the source being used is the sheet music from *Operette*, due to there being no known surviving copies of the revised version for *Set to Music.* As such, it does not include any of this additional material, due it to being removed early on in the run. The additional material appears to have been written specifically for *Set to Music*, but the number was then removed again. Its thematic content is much the same as the other verses and refrains, but with stronger emphasis on patriotism, “We can feel extremely proud / Our lineage we can trace / Back to the cradle of the Race…/ Our duty to the Nation / It’s only fair to state / Lies not in procreation / But what we procreate.”[[254]](#footnote-254)

# **Appendix 12: The additional refrain in ‘Never Again’**

This is love

Admit that this is love

Don’t take the risk of being just one more who misses love

Don’t quench this flame my dear

It’s such a charming game

That must be played my dear

Don’t be afraid my dear

Tho’ it may be prove to be false or sublime

Tho’ it may last just a moment in time

Give in to it

There’s no great sin to it

Life’s pretty short my dear

Why not be caught my dear?

# **Appendix 13: Refrains 2 and 5 of ‘I Went to a Marvellous Party’**

**Refrain 2**

I went to a marvellous party

With Nounou and Nada and Nell

It was in the fresh air

And we went as we were

And we stayed as we were which was hell

Poor Grace started singing at midnight

And did’nt [sic] stop ‘till four

We knew that the excitement was bound to begin

When Laura got blind on Dubonnet and Gin

And scratched her veneer on a Cartier pin

I could’nt [sic] have liked it more.

**Refrain 5**

I’ve been to a marvellous party

We played a most wonderful game

Maureen disappeared

And came back in a beard

And we all had to guess at her name

We talked about politics madly

And Niki was all for a war

He said “I give Russia her seven year plan

And I give you that Hitler’s a maddening man”

Then Jane got the giggles and gave me Japan!

I could’nt [sic] have liked it more.

# **Appendix 14: ‘I Went to a Marvellous Party’ and ‘I’ve Been to a Marvellous Party’**

The confusion between the two musical numbers is an issue that arose in 1965 when Coward himself mistakenly referred to this number with the incorrect title of ‘I’ve Been to a Marvellous Party’ and it has continued since, even occurring on archival inventories and finding aids, including the Noël Coward Archive held at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.[[255]](#footnote-255) The former is the title of a musical number in *The Girl Who Came to Supper* and only features in *Set to Music* as the opening line of Refrain 2 and the cut Refrain 5 of ‘I Went to a Marvellous Party’. The nature of the number is very different too, highlighted through the music alone: whilst the former is a comedy number, the latter is a waltz. ‘I Went to a Marvellous Party’ is a sketch that simply describes the events and enjoyment of the “marvellous party.”

# **Appendix 15: Press Announcement for *Set to Music***

Mr John. C. Wilson announces that he will present Miss Beatrice Lillie in a new Intimate Revue by Noël [sic] Coward this autumn. This Revue as yet untitled will be composed partly of new items especially written for Miss Lillie, and partly of certain numbers ~~and sketches~~ used in previous Coward ~~Revues~~ Musicals in London but never seen in this country. Miss Lillie’s immediate supporting cast will be recruited in England, especially for sketches and items requiring English artists and the balance of the company engaged on Broadway. Mr. Coward will come over personally to direct the production which is scheduled to open out of town about the end of November and come into New York around Christmas at a theatre not yet selected. Mr. Harry Kaufman, who was to have presented Miss Lillie this season, will have a financial interest in Mr. Wilson’s production.[[256]](#footnote-256)

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3. Actors who founded their now famous Theatre Collection, which is housed at the University of Bristol. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Revue: A Story in Pictures*. (London: Peter Davies, 1971), 1. From herein: Mander and Mitchenson, *Revue: A Story in Pictures*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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10. Mordden, *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Frank Cullen, *Vaudeville Old and New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performers in America*. Volume 2. (USA: Taylor and Francis Group Publishing, 2007), 846. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mordden, *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. George White was an American theatrical producer and director, who was also an actor, choreographer, dancer, lyricist and screenwriter; as well as a Broadway-theatre owner. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Mordden, *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. David Cannadine, ‘Men and Ideas’ in *Encounter*, March 1983. 38. Taken from: [www.unz.org/Pub/Encounter-1983mar-00036?View=PDF](http://www.unz.org/Pub/Encounter-1983mar-00036?View=PDF). Accessed 19/8/2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Mordden, *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s*, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Noël Coward, *Present Indicative*, (London: Methuen, 2004), 21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Noël Coward on Acting*. BBC Radio. First aired 12 March 1966. Taken from John Lahr. *Coward: The Playwright*, (London: Methuen London Limited, 1982), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. A French impresario known primarily for the staging of revues in London from 1912-1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. English theatre manager and impresario, who became known for producing musical revues and his association with Noël Coward. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Graham Payn with Barry Day, *My Life with* Noël Coward, (New York: Applause Books, 1994), 23. From herein: Payn with Day, *My Life with* Noël Coward. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Noël Coward, *Collected Sketches and Lyrics*. (London: Hutchinson and Co Ltd, 1931), Preface. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Mander and Mitchenson, *Revue: A Story in Pictures*. vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Mordden, *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s*. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Mander and Mitchenson, *Revue: A Story in Pictures*. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid., 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Charles B. Cochran (25/9/1872-31/1/1951) was an English theatrical manager and impresario. He was a leading figure during the 1920s and 1930s, producing many of the decades’ successful plays, musicals and revues. He became particularly well-known for his association with Coward and his works. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Sheridan Morley, A Talent to Amuse: A Biography of Noël Coward, (London: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1974), 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Sam Heppner, *Cockie*, (Leslie Frewin, 1969), 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Cole Lesley, *The Life of* Noël Coward, (UK: Penguin Books, 1976), 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Formal letter from Cochran to Coward, 20 July 1932. *NCA, E/10*. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Lesley, *The Life of* Noël Coward, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Morley, A Talent to Amuse, 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Payn with Day, *My Life with* Noël Coward. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Heppner, *Cockie*, 178-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *V&A Theatre Performance*, Miscellaneous (Noël Coward) Box No. 28. From herein: *V&A*, Misc (NC) Box No.28. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Review by an unknown critic for *The Daily Dispatch* within ‘The Irresistible Cochran-Coward Partnership’ article in *The Spectator*, *V&A*, Misc (NC) Box No.28. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Review by an known critic for *The Sunday Pictorial* within ‘The Irresistible Cochran-Coward Partnership’ article in *The Spectator*. *V&A*, Misc (NC) Box No.28. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Review by an known critic for *The Sunday Chronicle* within ‘The Irresistible Cochran-Coward Partnership’ article in *The Spectator*. *V&A*, Misc (NC) Box No.28. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Review by A. John Dannhornfor *Musical Standard*. Dated 22/10/32. *NCA* Section D Box 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Noël Coward, *Future Indefinite*, (London: Methuen Drama, 2004), 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Review by ‘Our London Correspondent’ in *Manchester Evening News*. Dated 30/5/1932. *V&A Theatre Performance*, ‘C. B. Cochran Collection Scrapbooks – THM/97’. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. James Ross Moore, *Andre Charlot: The Genius of Intimate Musical Revue*, (USA: McFarland and Co., 2005), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Charles Castle, *Noël*, (London: Abacus, Sphere Books, 1972), 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Coward, *Future Indefinite*, 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *JCW Collection*, GEN MSS MISC 3/33. Telegrams from Coward to Wilson, 5October 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Lesley, *The Life of* Noël Coward, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. John C. Wilson (19/8/1899-29/10/1961) was an American theatre director and producer. Met Coward during *The Vortex* and from here they developed both a professional and personal relationship. Wilson went on to produce several Coward shows including *Tonight at 8.30* and *Set to Music*, whilst making his directorial debut in 1941 with *Blithe Spirit*. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Morley, A Talent to Amuse, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Correspondence between Coward and Wilson (largely held in the Coward Archive at the Cadbury Research Library) shows how close they were but there are no overt references to their personal relationship. This is perhaps, on the part of Coward, because he did not wish to discuss his sexuality openly and of course, at this time, homosexuality was also illegal in the United Kingdom. Given that this was the case, it is highly unlikely that anything would have been explicitly recorded anyway. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Noël Coward, *The Letters of Noël Coward*, ed. Barry Day, (London: Methuen Drama, 2007), 91. From herein: Coward, *The Letters of Noël Coward* [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ibid., 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Stephen Citron, Noël & Cole: The Sophisticates, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992), 150. From herein: Citron, Noël & Cole: The Sophisticates [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., 150.. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Coward, *The Letters of Noël Coward*, 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Thomas. S. Hischak, *Stage It With Music: An Encyclopedic Guide to the American Musical Theater,* (USA: Greenwood Press, 1993), 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Coward, *The Letters of Noël Coward*, 359. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid., 359. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. These telegrams were located in the *General Collection Manuscript Miscellany* at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Referred to from herein as *GEN MSS MISC.* [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 30 August 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 6 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 8 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Producer, Director and Stage Manager. Prior to *Set to Music*, his productions included *Life Begins at 8.40* (1935), *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936* (1936) and *Between the Devil* (1938). Aside from *Between the Devil* which was a musical comedy, Dowling’s previous works were musical revues where he was stage director. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. According to Bruce Laffey (Lillie’s biographer and friend), Dowling was one of the men she truly loved. Following her sell-out performances at the Montmartre Club adjacent to the Winter Garden Theater in New York, Laffey states that Lillie realised she needed someone to help run her affairs now she was a star – she chose Dowling. According to Laffey, Dowling and Lillie would be lovers and remain friends for the next twenty years.

    Bruce Laffey, *Beatrice Lillie: The Funniest Woman in the World*. (UK: Robson Books Ltd, 1990), 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 26 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 27 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Press announcement for *Set to Music*, dated 13 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Lesley, *The Life of Noël Coward*, 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Salary sheet for the cast, itemising each respective actor’s salary. JCW, GEN MSS 608. 3/33. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Salary sheet, JCW, GEN MSS 608. 3/33. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 17 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 3 October 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 3 October 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Telegram dated 25 October 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. 14/9/1910 - 29/8/1982. An American composer and conductor of Broadway musicals, television and film. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater*, revised ed., with an introduction by Brooks Atkinson, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company., Inc., 1975), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ibid., 24-25 cited by Korey R. Rothman, *Somewhere There’s Music: Nancy Hamilton, The Old Girls’ Network, and The American Musical Theatre of the 1930s and 1940s*. (Thesis: University of Maryland, 2005. Thesis no: 3178609. ProQuest document ID: 304997097.) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Coward did not begin to keep a diary (or “journal” as he sometimes referred to it) until January 1941 so it is difficult to give precise dates as to when he was in America. However, he later made references to his transatlantic trips during the 1920s and 1930s, including during a radio interview where he said, “In the 20s and 30s whenever I was about to do a new production in England, I always used to go to New York for a fortnight and go to every single play because the tempo and the wonderful speed and vitality of the theatre was far superior to the English then.” (*Noël Coward on Acting*. BBC Radio. First aired 12 March 1966. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Julian Mates, ‘America’s Musical Stage: 200 Years of Musical Theatre’. *Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies*, No. 18. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. A political satire with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Ira Gershwin and Morrie Ryskind. It was also the first musical to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Review by unnamed critic in *Evening Standard*. Dated 21/4/1932. *V&A Theatre Performance*, ‘C. B. Cochran Collection Scrapbooks – THM/97’. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Review for C.B. Mortlock for an unknown source. Dated 17/9/1932. *V&A Theatre Performance, ‘*Noël Coward’s *Words and Music*’ – Adelphi 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Rosaline Biason, *The Ziegfeld Follies: A Study of Theatrical Opulence From 1907 to 1931*. (Ann Arbor: University of Denver, 1985. UMI Dissertation Information Service), 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Stanley Green, *Ring Bells! Sing Songs!; Broadway Musicals of the 1930’s*. (USA: Arlington House, 1971), 12. From herein: Stanley Green, *Ring Bells! Sing Songs!; Broadway Musicals of the 1930’s.* [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. M&M Collection, Folder MM/Ref/PF/WR/CNO/74 ‘Words and Music’. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Words and Music* programme from The Adelphi Theatre, M&M Collection, Folder MM/Ref/PF/WR/CNO/74 ‘Words and Music’. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Beinecke Library, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Beinecke Library GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. ‘Let’s Say Good-Bye’, ‘Housemaid’s Knees’, ‘Something To Do With Spring’ and ‘Wife of an Acrobat’. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Script dated 13 February 1939 [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Coward, *The Noël Coward Songbook*, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. *NCA*, E/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Review by F.E.D for an unknown source. Dated 25 August 1932. *V&A Theatre Performance, ‘*Noël Coward’s *Words and Music*’ – Adelphi 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. ‘Deutschland über Alles’ lyrics : ‘Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,/ Über alles in der Welt,…’ translates as ‘Germany, Germany above all else, / Above all else in the world,…’ [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Review by Ivor Brown for an unknown source. Undated. *V&A Theatre Performance, ‘*Noël Coward’s *Words and Music*’ – Adelphi 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *NCA*, E/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. There is a discrepancy on whether or not ‘Children’s Hour’ and ‘Let’s Live Dangerously’ are one sketch or separate entities but, for the purpose of this discussion, they will be discussed separately. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. *Words and Music* script, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *Words and Music* script, 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. *NCA*, E/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. *Words and Music* script, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. *Words and Music* script, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. *Words and Music* script, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Review for C.B. Mortlock for an unknown source. Dated 17/9/1932. *V&A Theatre Performance, ‘*Noël Coward’s *Words and Music*’ – Adelphi 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Taken from <http://www.incrediblelondon.co.uk/theatres/> Accessed 2 June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Picture of the stage from circa 1980. Generously provided by the Shubert Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. 22/1/1904 – 30/4/1983. He was one of the twentieth century’s most prominent choreographers. Co-founder of the School of American Ballet and the New York City Ballet. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. 14/5/1907-5/1/1996. An American writer and cultural figure in New York who co-founded the New York City Ballet with George Balanchine. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. 1936. A ballet with music by Richard Rodgers and choreography by George Balanchine. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. *NCA*, E/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. An American politician who became the 99th Mayor of New York City from 1934 to 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art,* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Ibid., 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Dan Dietz, *Off Broadway Musicals, 1910-2007: Casts, Credits, Songs, Critical Reception and Performance Data of More Than 1,800 Shows* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Nathan Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theater: No Business Like It* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Author of *Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre*. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Stanley Green, *Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre* (USA: Da Capo Press, 2009), 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. ‘Midnight Matinee’ and ‘The Party’s Over Now’ [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. George Burrows, *’Anything Goes’ on an ocean liner: Musical comedy as a carnivalistic heterotopia* in Studies in Musical Theatre. Vol. 7 Issue 3. (Intellect Ltd, 2013 (Dec)), 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: Norton, 2009) cited in Ibid, 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (London: s.n., 1933), xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. *Words and Music* script, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. *Words and Music* script, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. D. Eldridge, *American culture in the 1930s* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Information taken from the ‘Unemployment Statistics During the Great Depression’ webpage. [www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1528.html](http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1528.html) Accessed 29 November 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. *NCA*, E/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. *Words and Music* script, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. *Set to Music script*, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. ‘Theatre World’ clipping, *NCA*, E/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. ‘Three White Feathers’, *Set to* Music script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. *Words and Music* script, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Diary entry dated Friday 6 November 1942. *NCA*, H/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Ibid., 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Morley, *A Talent to Amuse: A Biography of Noël Coward*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Don B. Wilmeth with Tice L. Miller, *Cambridge Guide to American Theatre* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Allen Woll, *Black Musical Theatre: From Coontown to Dreamgirls* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Ibid., 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. ‘Weary of it All’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. The only difference between the two scripts here, is that the later one has the stage directions marked in. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. ‘Weary of It All’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. ‘Weary of It All’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. ‘Stately Homes’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. In the early script, it is verse – refrain – verse – refrain – 2nd refrain which feature in Act One. Subsequently, towards the end of Act Two, the sketch appears again with the structure: verse – refrain 1 – refrain 2. Conversely, the later script omits the second appearance of the sketch entirely. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Cecil Smith and Glenn Litton, *Musical Comedy in America.* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1981), 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. ‘Rug of Persia’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. The music is lost but the lyrics are extant. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*. (USA: Brondeis University Press, 2003), 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. William. J. Rorabaugh, Donald. T. Critchlow and Paula Baker. *America’s Promise: A Concise History of the United States*. Volume 2. (USA: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 549. From herein: Rorabaugh, Critchlow and Baker. *America’s Promise: A Concise History of the United States*. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Ibid., 549. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Feminist and political activist who was Head of the Women’s Division of the Democratic National Committee in 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Rorabaugh, Critchlow and Baker. *America’s Promise: A Concise History of the United States*.

     549. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Nick Smedley, *The Roots of Modern Hollywood: The Persistence of Values in American Cinema, From the New Deal to the Present*. (USA: Intellect, The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 160. From herein: Smedley, *The Roots of Modern Hollywood: The Persistence of Values in American Cinema, From the New Deal to the Present*. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. German American film director, producer, writer, and actor. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Smedley, *The Roots of Modern Hollywood: The Persistence of Values in American Cinema, From the New Deal to the Present*. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. ‘A Fragonard Impression’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. ‘A Fragonard Impression’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. ‘Secret Service’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. ‘Secret Service’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. ‘Secret Service’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. ‘Secret Service’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. ‘Madame Dines Alone’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. ‘Madame Dines Alone’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. ‘Madame Dines Alone’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. ‘Madame Dines Alone’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. ‘Never Again’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Alan Farley & Dominic Vlasto. 2014. *www.Noëlcowardmusic.com.* Accessed June 30 2014. http://www.Noëlcowardmusic.com/ncmi/n\_o.html#neveragain [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. ‘Never Again’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Coward, *The Noël Coward Songbook,* 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. ‘Madame Dines Alone’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Alan Farley & Dominic Vlasto. 2014. *www.Noëlcowardmusic.com.* Accessed June 30 2014. http://www.Noëlcowardmusic.com/ncmi/i.html#iwtamp [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. ‘Marvellous Party’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F7-8-9, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Refrain 5, which was also a new refrain for the number in the later script, is cut – leaving Refrain 4 to close the number. [See Appendix 13 for the full versions of Refrains 2 and 5 respectively] There are two sets of sheet music for this number but unfortunately neither of them, neither separately nor collectively, provide the music for the whole number. Instead, the one only consists of the music for Verse 1 and Refrain 2, whilst the second (from the *All Clear* production) consists of Verse 1, Refrain 2 and Refrain 4, with the latter written in red after being added at a later date. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. American playwright, screenwriter, and film director. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Smedley, *The Roots of Modern Hollywood: The Persistence of Values in American Cinema, From the New Deal to the Present*, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Review by John Anderson for the *New York Journal*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: John Anderson, *New York Journal.* [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Review by Brooks Atkinson for *The New York Times*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Review by Arthur Pollock for the *Brooklyn Daily Early.* Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Review by Burns Mantle for the *New York Daily News*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Burns Mantle, *New York Daily News*. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Review by Unknown Author for *Variety*. Dated 25 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Unknown Author, *Variety*. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Unknown Author, *Variety*. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Review by Sidney. R. Whipple for *New York World Telegram*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Sidney. R. Whipple, *New York World Telegram*. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Review by John Cambridge for *Daily Worker New York*. Dated 21 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: John Cambridge, *Daily Worker New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. John Cambridge, *Daily Worker New York..* [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. John Cambridge, *Daily Worker New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Review by Richard Watts Jnr for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Review by John Mason Brown for the *New York Post*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Review by Richard Lockridge for the *New York Sun*. Dated 19 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Richard Lockridge, *New York Sun*. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Sidney. R. Whipple, *New York World Telegram*. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. John Anderson, *New York Journal.* [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Burns Mantle, *New York Daily News*. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. John Cambridge, *Daily Worker New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Unknown Author, *Variety*. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Review by Walter Winchell for *Daily Mirror New York*. Dated 25 January 1939. *NYPL*, ‘Collection of Newspaper Clippings of Dramatic Criticisms’. From herein: Walter Winchell, *Daily Mirror New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Sidney. R. Whipple, *New York World Telegram*. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Sidney. R. Whipple, *New York World Telegram*. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Sidney. R. Whipple, *New York World Telegram*. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Richard Lockridge, *New York Sun*. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. John Anderson, *New York Journal.* [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Walter Winchell, *Daily Mirror New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times.* [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Richard Lockridge, *New York Sun*. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. John Mason Brown, *New York Post*. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Walter Winchell, *Daily Mirror New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Richard Watts Jnr, *New York Herald Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. John Cambridge, *Daily Worker New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. John Cambridge, *Daily Worker New York.* [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Sidney. R. Whipple, *New York World Telegram*. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. John Snelson and Andrew Lamb. *Musical*. Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online (OUP, 2013). <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19420> Accessed 18/4/2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Stanley Green, *The Great Clowns of Broadway*. (USA: Oxford University Press, 1984), 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. James Ross Moore, *An Intimate Understanding: the Rise of British Musical Revue 1890-1920*. University of Warwick, June 2000. 190. <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/4012/> Accessed 24/2/2016. From herein: James Ross Moore, *An Intimate Understanding: the Rise of British Musical Revue 1890-1920*. <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/4012/> [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Ibid., 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Headline of the review ‘The Play’ by Brooks Atkinson. Taken from *New York Times*. Dated 19/1/1939. Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/102846022?accountid=9735> Accessed 22/3/2016. From herein: ‘The Play’ by Brooks Atkinson <http://search.proquest.com/docview/102846022?accountid=9735> [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Stanley Green, *Ring Bells! Sing Songs! : Broadway Musicals of the 1930’s*. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Sketches by Arthur Arent, Marc Blitzstein, Emanuel Eisenberg, Charles Friedman, Harold J. Rome and David Gregory. Music and lyrics mostly by Harold J. Rome. 11 June 1936. Second edition 20 April 1939. Third edition 25 November 1939 – 22 June 1940 after a total of 1108 performances. Offers sketches based on politically and socially charged issues. the initial premise for the musical was to sing about topics that conveyed the message of the union and its workers. At the commencement of its conception, the revue was to have a specific focus - the left-wing International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), but it became much more general as the revue started to become more important than the workers’ message (something that is made especially obvious by the fact they gave up their needlework jobs and became actors). [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Review by Brooks Atkinson in *New York Times*. Dated 23/9/1938. Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/102552404?accountid=9735>. Accessed 22/3/2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. James Ross Moore, *An Intimate Understanding: the Rise of British Musical Revue 1890-1920*. <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/4012/> 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Ibid., 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Noël Coward, *Collected Sketches and Lyrics*. (London: Hutchinson and Co Ltd, 1931), Preface. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Revue: A Story in Pictures*. (London: Peter Davies, 1971), vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Coward in an interview in 1963. During this position he defined his attitude towards his audience when he first began his career. Quoted in John G. Rogers, ‘Noël Coward on Noël Coward’. *New York Magazine, New York Herald Tribune*. Dated 8 December 1963, 35. Cited by Carolyn Sherrill White Rogers, *Dramatic Structure in the Comedies of Noël Coward: The Influence of the Festive Tradition*. Ann Arbor, USA: The Florida State University, 1972. ProQuest ID: 288250773. Thesis no: 7231427. P23. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Rosaline Biason’s reasons on the success of *The Follies.* Cited in Rosaline Biason, *The Ziegfeld Follies: A Study of Theatrical Opulence From 1907 to 1931*. (Ann Arbor: University of Denver, 1985). UMI Dissertation Information Service, 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Beinecke Library in the General Collection Manuscript Miscellany Collection [GEN MSS MISC] [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. *Set to Music script*, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. ‘Stately Homes’, *Set to Music* script, GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Item F6 [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. *NCA* finding aid: [http://calmview.bham.ac.uk/GetDocument.ashx?db=Catalog&fname=COW+%28Noël+Coward%29.pdf](http://calmview.bham.ac.uk/GetDocument.ashx?db=Catalog&fname=COW+%28Noel+Coward%29.pdf) (Accessed 10/10/2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. GEN MSS MISC Group 3096 Items F7-8-9. Press announcement for *Set to Music*, dated 13 September 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)