ROLLING THE DICE: AN EXAMINATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR
CHOREOGRAPHING THEATRE IN THE ROUND THROUGH THE
LENS OF GUYS AND DOLLS

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Cassandra Ann Abate
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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Project of Cassandra Ann Abate:

Rolling the Dice: An Examination of Principles for Choreographing Theatre in
the Round Through the Lens of *Guys and Dolls*

___________________________________________
Paula Kalustian, Chair
School of Theatre, Television, and Film

___________________________________________
Dr. Hopkins
School of Theatre, Television, and Film

___________________________________________
Laurinda Nikkel
School of Music and Dance

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Approval Date
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DEDICATION

This project report is dedicated to Vince Cardinal and Clay James, who nurtured my interest in choreography, provided me with opportunities to learn the craft, and introduced me to the exciting possibilities of theatre in the round.
ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT

Rolling the Dice: An Examination of Principles for Choreographing Theatre in the Round Through the Lens of Guys and Dolls

by

Cassandra Ann Abate
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts
San Diego State University, 2012

Choreographing for theatre in the round presents many interesting challenges. However, little literature is devoted to the topic. When analyzing books on directing and choreography, information on the techniques for creating theatre in the round was limited to a sentence, a paragraph, or a few pages. The lack of information available inspired a closer inspection on the aspects of choreography unique to arena staging. This project will examine these challenges by exploring how the principles of creating choreography in the round differ from the established conventions for developing choreography on a proscenium stage. This analysis will be done through the lens of my experience with the musical Guys and Dolls.

In April 2008, I choreographed a production of the musical Guys and Dolls at the University of Miami’s Jerry Herman Ring Theatre. This well-received production was staged in the round with a cast of thirty-five performers. Then in June 2011, the same creative team assembled to present Guys and Dolls at the Connecticut Repertory Theatre’s Nutmeg Summer Series. This incarnation of the musical, featuring many of the same actors, was adapted for a proscenium theatre, this time with a much smaller cast of twenty performers. This project report explores the techniques of creating choreography for theatre in the round by analyzing how the choreography for these two productions was adjusted to different stage configurations in order to visually create the most impact.

The following chapters outline the techniques of choreographing for theatre in the round and how these techniques differ from those used to choreograph in proscenium by addressing various principles. Chapter 2 will define the different stage spaces of proscenium and theatre in the round and consider the advantages and challenges of each configuration. It will also give a history of the evolution of theatre in the round and establish a vocabulary for creating movement on an arena stage. Chapter 3 will examine formations, discussing how compositions such as a line, a circle, and a wedge must be altered for different performance spaces. The challenges of featuring a soloist and the question of symmetry versus asymmetry are also investigated. Chapter 4 analyzes movement patterns, including stage crosses, waves, advances, and traveling patterns. Additionally, it addresses the quantity and quality of transitions, how different stage orientations change the role of the audience, and the concept of opposition. Chapter 5 discusses the importance of choreography in telling the story. The history of the role of dance in the fully integrated musical and an investigation of how dance was used by choreographer Michael Kidd in the original production of Guys and Dolls is followed by a detailed analysis of how dance was used to further the plot when the Havana Sequence was choreographed in the round and how that storytelling choreography
was adapted for the proscenium production. Chapter 6 examines how traditional techniques for staging a song in a proscenium theatre can be adjusted for an arena stage. It also considers the benefits and disadvantages of the two different stage spaces when creating physical comedy or vaudevillian bits. Chapter 7 reflects on the previous chapters to propose conclusions about the techniques for choreographing in the round and the importance of different stage spaces in the evolution of musical theatre.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Theatre in the round is thought to be the oldest and most primal form of theatre. However, despite the long history and number of current theatres operating in the round, very little literature is devoted to the topic. When analyzing books on directing and choreography, information on the techniques for creating theatre in the round was limited to a sentence, a paragraph, or a few pages. The lack of information available inspired a closer inspection on the aspects of choreography unique to arena staging. Choreographing for theatre in the round presents many interesting challenges. This project will examine these challenges by exploring how the principles of creating choreography in the round differ from the established conventions for developing choreography on a proscenium stage. This analysis will be done through the lens of my experience with the musical *Guys and Dolls*.

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Two of the primary sources used in this project report were journals I wrote to document the experiences of each production. The first journal discussed concepts acquired after choreographing *Guys and Dolls* in the round. The second chronicled the daily experiences of adapting and creating new choreography for the proscenium theatre production. I also referenced archival footage of both productions. In order to defend or question my theories, I examined books addressing the principles of directing, choreographing and staging musical theatre, such as *Staging Musical Theatre: A Complete*

I also investigated books focusing on musical theatre history such as Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater by Larry Stempel and Strike Up the Band: A New History of Musical Theatre by Scott Miller, as well as writings on the conventions of theatre in the round such as Theatre in the Round by Stephen Joseph, Theatre-in-the-Round by Margo Jones, and the article “Directing for the Open Stage” by Irvin J. Atkins.

The following chapters outline the techniques of choreographing for theatre in the round and how these techniques differ from those used to choreograph in proscenium by addressing various principles. Chapter 2 will define the different stage spaces of proscenium and theatre in the round and consider the advantages and challenges of each configuration. It will also give a history of the evolution of theatre in the round and establish a vocabulary for creating movement on an arena stage. Chapter 3 will examine formations, discussing how compositions such as a line, a circle, and a wedge must be altered for different performance spaces. The challenges of featuring a soloist and the question of symmetry versus asymmetry are also investigated. Chapter 4 analyzes movement patterns, including stage crosses, waves, advances, and traveling patterns. Additionally, it addresses the quantity and quality of transitions, how different stage orientations change the role of the audience, and the concept of opposition. Chapter 5 discusses the importance of choreography in telling the story. The history of the role of dance in the fully integrated musical and an investigation of how dance was used by choreographer Michael Kidd in the original production of Guys and Dolls is followed by a detailed analysis of how dance was used to further the plot when the Havana Sequence was choreographed in the round and how that storytelling choreography was adapted for the proscenium production. Chapter 6 examines how traditional techniques for staging a song in a proscenium theatre can be adjusted for an arena stage. This chapter also considers the benefits and disadvantages of the two different stage spaces when creating physical comedy or vaudevillian bits. Chapter 7 reflects on the previous chapters to propose...
conclusions about the techniques for choreographing in the round and the importance of different stage spaces in the evolution of musical theatre.
CHAPTER 2
DIFFERING STAGE SPACES AND THEIR HISTORY

Because choreography is movement through space, the space in many respects dictates the movement. Stephen Joseph describes a proscenium stage in his book *Theatre in the Round*:

[Proscenium theatre] is characterized by its picture-frame stage and the architectural separation of the auditorium space from the stage space. The proscenium theatre has two “houses”, divided by the proscenium wall. The stage is enclosed; and this suggests the term *open stage* to describe stages that are in the same architectural space as the auditorium. (11)

Differing from the proscenium stage, open stages have no separation between performers and the audience. “The various kinds of open stage can themselves be distinguished by the extent to which the audience embraces, as it were, the acting area” (Joseph 11-13). An end stage has audience on one side, a corner stage contains spectators on two sides, and a thrust stage is defined by having the audience on three sides. Theatre in the round, also referred to as central staging, arena staging, or circular staging, is the most extreme form of an open stage, where the audience surrounds the action on all sides. Theatre in the round is “a form of theatre where the audience more or less surrounds a central stage, so that if the actor stands in the middle and turns round he always has as many people behind him as in front of him” (Joseph 11).

Many theatres are built specifically for theatre in the round, while others offer adjustable seating, where the stage configuration may be changed depending on the needs of the production. In various arena theatres, the stage space takes on a variety of shapes including an actual circle, an ellipse, a square, or a rectangle. The size of the house ranges from an intimate 100 to an expansive 2,000 seats. To help with audience sightlines, many times the audience is raked above the stage floor or the stage itself is raised. The latter creates a distorted vantage point for the first few rows of spectators if the seats are right at the edge of the stage, so often with a raised stage there is space between the stage and the first
row of audience members that can be used for lighting or for actors to walk on the ground level. In theatre in the round, vomitoriums, or voms, are the entrances and exits from the stage. The concept of these entrances date back to 5th century Athens, where actors and chorus used gangways called parados to enter the orchestra, or acting space. However, the word “vomitorium” originated in Ancient Rome, when it described large passages used to enter and exit an amphitheater. Today, these aisles are often times also used by the audience to enter and exit the theatre. However, voms may alternately lead actors offstage by passing under the audience.

Both proscenium and arena stages inherently have benefits and challenges. The proscenium stage allows the director and choreographer to clearly control the picture viewed by the audience:

The proscenium stage presents a play to the audience from behind the frame of a picture. On this stage, pictures of each moment are designed by the director to transmit some sort of information to the audience. The setting and properties convey the environment. Picturization, composition, and movement concentrate on clarifying the drama. Transmission of direct information of this sort is made possible by the fact that all of the audience are disposed before the proscenium opening. The maximum angle allows each spectator to view the same basic relationship between objects in space. (Atkins 231)

Contrary to the singular viewpoint offered by a proscenium theatre, one of the main challenges for creating theatre in the round is the fact that the surrounding audience is viewing the action from multiple perspectives:

A multi-perspective stage organizes the audience about the playing area, not before it... the audience see [sic] different relationships between the actors on stage and so interpret differently. The inability to perceive an intended relationship is the chief diffculty the director must overcome on the multi-perspective stage. (Atkins 232)

However, central staging offers numerous unique benefits. Because little or no scenery is necessary, theatre in the round is cost effective and offers the performers and creative team the opportunity to find imaginative ways to establish an environment. “The completely empty acting area is tremendously attractive and, for many plays, gives the actors absolute freedom to show their skill in building an environment of imagination, a skill exciting to watch in a way that real furnishings seldom are” (Joseph 63). Also, arena staging allows more audience members to be seated closer to the action onstage. “It is one of the main strengths of theatre in the round that in fairly limited distance from the stage a
comparatively large audience can be contained” (Joseph 71). This creates an intimacy between performer and spectator and enables the actor to aim his or her performance equally to all parts of the audience.

Arena staging is not a new concept. Children instinctively play in the round. They create environments that expand in all directions. Many children’s games, such as Duck Duck Goose, Ring Around the Rosie, London Bridge, and Monkey in the Middle also have action that includes and is surrounded by spectators. Sports arenas, bullrings, and circuses all offer entertainments in the round. “The entertainment that most nearly bridges the gap between drama and sport, also makes notable use of the central acting area is circus [sic]” (Joseph 120). Theatre in the round is often thought to be the first form of theatre, developing even before speech or written word: “Theatre in the round lays claim to being a very primitive form of theatre, probably the common beginning for most formal drama that is known to us” (Joseph 16). It began with storytelling and tribal dances as spectators instinctively surrounded the action. “When an audience surrounds a play, it is performing one of the oldest rituals of humanity: the tribe standing or sitting in a circle around its ritual dancers, its shaman, its evoked heroes who move around the fire in the center” (Hodge and McLain 193).

There is much debate over the nature of the first acting space used in Ancient Greece. German archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld offered one theory:

The earliest sign of an acting area is an arc of seven stones uncovered by a German archaeologist called Wilhelm Dörpfeld in 1886. These stones, mostly still in place, allowed him to project a large circle of about 24 metres in diameter as the orchestra of the classical period. This vision of the classical theatre as a primitive dancing circle appealed to the romantic mood of the day. (Wiles 100)

It is now widely believed that as formal drama developed, the thespians of 6th century Greece performed on a circular space called the orchestra. The main acting area showcased an altar in the center, and audience members surrounded the playing space on 3 sides, resembling a deep thrust stage. However, when the decision was made to create amphitheaters by raising the audience up and placing them on a hillside, the spectators only surrounded half of the stage because the hills only sloped in one direction. This caused the stage to evolve from a circle to a semicircle:

The theatre at Athens was not planned from the outset but evolved, and a natural hollow in the hillside was gradually transformed into a roughly semicircular form.
The obvious advantage of the semicircular bowl is that it creates the best possible sightlines and acoustics, in addition to a feeling of democratic equality – so this form probably emerged at an early date. (Wiles 102)

This stage shape continued in Roman theatre, but the Romans continued to enjoy other forms of entertainment presented in the round at the Colosseum (gladiatorial contests and public spectacles) and the Circus Maximus (chariot racing and public events).

Theatre in the round appeared again in the Middle Ages. The mystery plays were performed in a series of mansions, or pageant wagons, that were situated in a circle. Actors and audiences traveled from wagon to wagon as the scene shifted or a whole new story began. The open central acting area between the wagons allowed for arena staging, and was used for journeys or scenes with large amounts of vigorous action. The center was also often the location of the theatrical re-enactment of the crucifixion. These practices eventually gave way to the open stages of the Elizabethan period, where the audience surrounded the stage on three sides.

Though dormant in formal theatre, arena staging was kept alive by traveling actors and street performers. The Mummers’ Plays were presented all over Europe and would be performed in the middle of a circle of spectators. The traditional opening line was “A ring, a ring, I enter in . . .” (Joseph 26). Despite these entertainments, the proscenium theatre emerged in the early 17th century during the Italian Renaissance as painted scenery developed and the desire to gain perspective on these artworks grew. Proscenium theatre, where the audience was limited to the area directly in front of the proscenium arch, quickly came to dominate popular performance in Europe.

In the early 20th century, many European artists began to resist the modes of storytelling that had become widespread and conventional. As the proscenium arch had saturated European theatrical production, a turn from this architecture seemed to be a useful way to turn from conventional modes of storytelling as well. Numerous directors and artists desired a return to the intimacy between performer and spectator established with open stages. French and German artists such as Jacques Copeau, Max Reinhardt, Jacques Dalcroze, and Adolphe Appia experimented in the early 20th century with alternative stage spaces. Then in 1930, Nikolai Okhlopkov achieved this intimate meeting of audience and actor with his Moscow Realistic Theatre: the first professional modern theater to use completely central staging.
At the same time that European artists were questioning theatrical conventions, directors in America, including Azubah Latham in 1914 and T. Earl Pardoe in 1922, started experimenting with central staging at colleges and universities. In 1940, Glenn Hughes built the Penthouse Theatre, the first theatre to be built for arena staging in America, at the University of Washington. Theatre in the round started to gain favor because of its ability to create intimacy, its capacity for larger audiences, and the low cost of productions. Colleges and community theatres began to explore the possibilities of this stage configuration. In 1947, Margo Jones founded the first professional theatre in the round in America, Theatre ’47, in Dallas, Texas. Circular staging was adopted in the 1960’s by experimental theatre troupes that rebelled against the conventional proscenium theatre and searched for a new “popular” theatre. Today there are over 50 professional and university theatres that are either built for theatre-in-the-round, or can be adjusted to arena staging. Some notable theatres include the Broadway house Circle in the Square in New York City and Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. For a list of current arena theatres, see the Appendix.

When creating stage directions or choreography, it is important to develop a common language that describes the parts of the stage. This allows the director and choreographer to communicate their vision with the performers and designers. In a proscenium theatre, words like upstage, downstage, center stage, stage left, and stage right help to define areas onstage. However, these descriptions all refer the relationship between the performer standing onstage and the audience out in front. Therefore, when creating stage compositions in the round, a different vocabulary must be used. While there is not one definitive method for labeling the circular stage, the most common approach is to number the parts of the stage like the face of a clock.

The University of Miami’s Jerry Herman Ring Theatre is an adjustable theatre that is often configured in the round for large musicals. For the 2008 production of *Guys and Dolls*, the stage was completely circular and raised up. The audience sections were also elevated and sloped. The four voms were labeled as numbers on the clock, at the 12, 3, 6, and 9 positions. Voms 3 and 9 were at ground level with steps leading up to the stage. The audience also used these aisles as entrances and exits to the theatre. Voms 12 and 6 were ramps that remained on stage level and led the actors backstage. The four audience sectors were labeled letters A through D (see Figure 1).
In contrast, Connecticut Repertory Theatre’s Harriet S. Jorgenson Theatre is a traditional proscenium theatre. For the 2011 production of *Guys and Dolls*, a unit set was utilized (see Figure 2).

These layouts will continually be referred to as the following chapters explore the principles of formations, movement patterns, telling the story, staging a song, and comedic devices.
A proscenium theatre and a theatre-in-the-round are two extremely distinct stage spaces that require different approaches when visualizing and creating choreography. In the round, the choreographer has to think of images in a three dimensional context rather than the flat, two-dimensional window of a proscenium. “In [theatre in the round], the stage director must take his cue from the modern sculpture rather than from the pictorial artist” (Atkins 232). When creating a musical theatre production number, it is important to ascertain what story is being communicated through the dance, and what images the audience needs to witness in order to understand that story. One tool to manipulate the audience’s focus is the formation of the dancers. How you control the spectator’s experience is very different if you are choreographing on a proscenium stage than if you are building pictures in the round. Formations that are standard in a proscenium theatre must be adapted to ensure that the audience perceives the dancers and understands the story.

When deciding how a spectator views a formation in the round, there are three options that each impacts the audience in a distinct way. The first is to create one picture or action on stage and allow each member of the audience to observe it from a different angle. This affects primary and secondary focuses because the changes in perspective will highlight various parts of the action. Some will see performers straight on, while others will ascertain different information by viewing the performers’ profiles or backs. The second option is to establish a singular vantage point by staging movement in one vom. When an actor or dancer has his or her back to an aisle, the whole audience views the picture from the same angle. This technique works best when trying to accomplish an image onstage that is better suited for a proscenium theatre. For example, in the Hot Box number, “Bushel and a Peck,” all of the girls put their hats together and then fanned them out to reveal Adelaide. The idea of a reveal, a convention used often on a proscenium stage, is only effective if the choreographer is able to control the audience’s focus. In the round, this was accomplished by putting all the girls in one vom. The third option is to provide every audience section with
its own version of the formation. Each section has a dancer or a group of dancers that are performing the same steps in the same formation as the dancers facing the other sections. This option works well with unison dancing and is useful at moments in the show when the performers are trying to directly relate to the audience. During the striptease section of the production number, “Take Back Your Mink,” each of the four audience sections had a line of two or three girls performing towards them, establishing interaction between the spectators and the performers. When creating formations, it is important to note that the areas of strength onstage change depending on the space. Lines, circles, and wedges are all formations that are standard on stage, but their strength differs depending on the theatre configuration.

The horizontal line is one of the most basic proscenium formations. It is strong because the formation follows the line of the proscenium arch. When the audience sees all the performers side-by-side, it makes a captivating visual. “Lines are excellent to display the virtuosity, precision foot work and energy of the trio, quartet or quintet although, of course, one of the classic dance formations is the long line of chorus girls” (Sunderland and Pickering 75). The vertical line is also visually powerful in a proscenium setting, especially when dancers branch out in opposing directions, appear at varying levels, or if there are several vertical lines placed next to each other. Finally, the diagonal line delivers a compelling, asymmetrical statement in proscenium. “A group of performers . . . appear visually very strong when facing a diagonal” (Sunderland and Pickering 72).

There are several different variations of the line that could be used in arena staging. The first is a line from one vom to the vom directly opposite, with the dancers facing every other way (see Figure 3). In the number “The Oldest Established,” this formation was used to portray the message that each of the gangsters lined up and stood behind Nathan Detroit because he ran such a respectable floating crap game. Nathan stood in one vom and all the men ran to line up in front of him. Then, as they all started to sing, the crapshooters faced opposing directions to include the audience in this time-honored tradition.

For a line formation, a second approach is to have two lines back to back. Surprisingly, this composition is not as strong if the two lines run from one vom to the opposing vom (see Figure 4). In this scenario, most of the audience members experience the formation from an angle because in actuality, the two lines are facing the aisles. It is more
effective to have the two lines run from the center of an audience section to the center of the opposing audience section (see Figure 5). This way, two audience sections are getting a full view of the line. Then if the choreographer switches up the orientation of the formation, the remaining two sectors receive a full view.
A third option is to give each group of spectators its own line (see Figure 6). If you looked at this formation from a birds-eye view, it would resemble a square inside of a circle. This variation allows each audience member to receive the full visual impact of the line. However, this line does not carry the same strength that a horizontal line in a proscenium theatre inherently possesses. In proscenium, a horizontal line mimics the border created by the proscenium arch. In the round, the straight line fights against the curve of the stage and may be unsettling for the audience. This formation is also difficult for performers to achieve, because they will instinctually want to follow the rounded edge of the stage.

![Figure 6. Line formation variation 4.](image)

The circle is another formation whose effectiveness changes depending on the stage configuration. On a proscenium stage, circles are a difficult formation because they intrinsically exclude the audience members, who are not part of the circle (see Figure 7). “The circle is a formation to be treated with caution and discretion: its basic symmetry means that it has no spatial tension and may have such associations as primitive ritual or children’s game for the spectator” (Sunderland and Pickering 79). However, a circle becomes more interesting if there are varying levels within the circle. In the proscenium staging of the production number “Bushel and a Peck,” the character of Adelaide stood in the center of the circle while the Hot Box girls, wielding feather fans, rotated around her. The girls in front remained low while the girls at the back of the circle stayed up high. This created a visual image reminiscent of Busby Berkeley and the era of precision showgirls.
While it is difficult to make a strong statement with a circle formation in proscenium, this formation is fundamentally effective in the round. It is extremely powerful because the audience is, in essence, fully involved in the shape. When a choreographer creates a circle with performers facing out, it allows every audience member to see an actor directly facing full front. This is the strongest formation in the round because the actors can completely relate to the audience (see Figure 8). At the end of the rousing production number, “Sit Down, You’re Rocking the Boat,” the entire cast, positioned in two circles (one inside of the other), faced the audience to perform the final movements, ending with their arms up in great exuberance.

The wedge, or the “V” formation, is intrinsically a proscenium formation. “It carries the inherent strengths of diagonal lines and their points of merger, and is both more interesting and provides fewer masking problems than the square” (Sunderland and Pickering 80). This stage picture offers depth, and the two lines automatically draw focus to the point,
which may be the furthest downstage or the furthest upstage depending on what message the choreographer wishes to convey. When the point of the “V” is upstage, the audience is drawn into the action onstage (see Figure 9). This formation was used in the proscenium version of the numbers “The Crapshooters’ Ballet” and “Luck Be a Lady,” both of which contain a crap game. The person rolling the dice was placed upstage center, while the fellow crapshooters were in diagonal lines at varying levels. This brought the audience into the crap game, and the straight, angular lines created tension felt by the rollers and, most importantly, Sky Masterson. Conversely, when the point is downstage, the formation becomes more presentational, and the energy is projected out towards the audience (see Figure 10). This stage picture was beneficial for the production numbers that took place inside the Hot Box Club, because the girls are supposed to be performing for an audience. In the number “Take Back Your Mink,” Adelaide and the women broke out into a tap dance. The wedge formation was utilized with Adelaide as the point downstage. This shape allowed the performers to become extremely presentational in their delivery of the choreography.

Figure 9. “V” formation with point upstage.

Figure 10. Wedge formation with point downstage.
In the round, the wedge, or “V,” is a challenging shape, but when used properly, it can also be compelling. There are again three different ways to adapt the wedge formation, employing the three ways to design any stage picture in the round. The first, where each spectator views one aspect of the whole picture, is established by two wedges that are back to back and face opposing voms. The choreographer may either choose to have all the members of the “V” formation face the same direction, or have the two sides cheat out towards an audience section, so that only the point of the “V” is facing the aisle (see Figure 11). In the “Crapshooters’ Ballet,” this formation was employed for a section where six dancers, creating a V on either side of the stage, broke away from the rest to execute more advanced steps.

![Figure 11. “V” formation variation 1.](image)

The second variation, where the important focus point is put in one of the voms, is also applicable to the wedge. This is achieved when point of the “V” is put in one vom and the two lines fan out onto the stage, still throwing focus to the central person (see Figure 12). This alternative was powerful at the opening of the “Crapshooters’ Ballet.” The gambler rolling the dice was positioned in one vom with three men supporting on either side. Then for the next roll, the same formation was transferred to another vom so the audience view shifted.

The third alternative involves presenting each audience section with its own version of the formation (see Figure 13). In the final moments of the “Crapshooters’ Ballet,” a group of rollers faced each audience sector in a “V” formation and buttoned the number by “rolling the dice” out towards the audience while exclaiming “Craps!”
Formations within a dance must constantly vary to keep the routine visually stimulating. “Repeating compositions can be dull for spectators. They like visual variation, so stage directors must guard against being repetitious” (Novak and Novak 82). In the round, since each audience section views the action from a different angle, this variation is possible not only by completely changing the formation, but also by taking the same formation and moving it to a different part of the stage. In “The Crapshooters’ Ballet,” gangsters played craps in a “V” formation, with the roller at the point. At the beginning of the ballet, three different men took their turn rolling the dice. In the round, it remained interesting because the game moved from vom 6 to vom 12, and finally to vom 3. When the number was adapted for the proscenium, it was stuck at center and did not have the same visual variance.

When “The Crapshooter’s Ballet” was staged in the round, it remained exciting not only because the stage picture changed, but also because the spectators were able to view the dancers from all sides, including the front, profile, and back. Choreographer Bob Fosse was
a master at communicating story through the movement of a dancer’s back. Various angles of the performers, such as profile, three quarter, and full back, can be very expressive and demonstrate deep facets of the characters. They also have the ability to create second and third points of focus, where the audience is seeing the main character as well as the reaction of others onstage. These alternative body angles are inherent in theatre in the round because one person onstage will be full front to some and full back to others. However, these directions can also be useful tools in proscenium to portray emotion and create visual interest and diversity.

Often in a musical theatre production number, the goal is to feature a soloist while the ensemble offers support. “In devising stage pictures, the stage director must know how to control the spectators’ attention by getting them to look at the important character(s) at that moment and ignore the unimportant ones so that the audience will understand what is happening” (Novak and Novak 81). On a proscenium stage, there are conventions that have proven successful at highlighting a featured performer by putting the soloist in a position of strength or using the ensemble to direct the audience’s focus. Some options include centering the soloist while the ensemble members surround (either in a semi-circle or a “V” formation), putting the soloist down center while the rest of the people onstage create formations behind, putting the soloist up on a level, or juxtaposing movement and stillness. This last alternative may be achieved in two ways. The first is to have the lead remain still while the chorus is active. The other choice is to leave the ensemble stationary while the soloist weaves around them. Design is also an important tool for isolating a central character. Costumes and color aid in making one performer stand out while blending others together. Lighting can also manipulate a spectator’s attention through the intensity of the light and the focus on specific areas of the stage. When staging in the round, it is much more difficult to highlight a single performer among many, because audience members view the action from different perspectives. Costume and lighting designs become crucial in controlling the audience’s attention as well as establishing time and place, since large set units are not effective on an arena stage. Levels are always a foolproof way to insure that every audience member sees the soloist. In the arena staging of both production numbers that took place at the Hot Box Club, “Bushel and a Peck” and “Take Back Your Mink,” the character of Adelaide stood on a level center stage while the other Hot Box girls danced
around her. When these dances were adjusted to a proscenium stage, the levels were no longer necessary. The actress playing Adelaide was able to stand center in a place of strength and take focus, while the other girls were staged around her.

Another way to bring focus to one performer in the round is to place him or her in one of the voms. This way, all audience members clearly observe the performer’s face from the same angle. The problem with this formation is that action on the stage may block the audience’s view of the vom. There are two ways to remedy this. The first is to position all performers in a vom. It does not matter if the ensemble members are in the same vom as the soloist or spread out amongst the remaining voms. The second is to situate the highlighted performer on a higher level than the rest of the cast onstage. The soloist can either stand on a level in the vom, such as a platform or chair, or the people onstage can attain a lower level by sitting or crouching. In response to the question of what to do with an ensemble on an arena stage when a soloist is featured, Irvin J. Atkins theorizes, “The solution, then, is either to put [the ensemble] into motion about the focal center, or to remove them to a place outside the sightlines along the circumference they now occupy” (234).

A variety of these methods were used in the large production number, “Sit Down, You’re Rocking the Boat.” When this showstopper was choreographed in the round, there were thirty-two actors onstage, and the character of Nicely-Nicely Johnson was the soloist. The set consisted of a large desk center stage. Benches were placed like spokes of a wheel; two benches on each side of the desk that could face center stage or out towards an aisle (see Figure 14). At the start of the number, all the ensemble members were either seated on a bench, or standing deep into a vom. Nicely-Nicely was then able to command focus in several different ways. He stood in a vom while everyone else was seated. He was able to weave around the stage and stand on a bench while the rest of the ensemble remained seated. He also grabbed the audience’s attention when he stood on the higher center desk, even as others were standing up on stage or on one of the lower benches. This flexibility allowed the stage picture to be changed often and kept it visually interesting while the audience was still able to track Nicely-Nicely throughout the number.
Figure 14. Set layout for production number “Sit Down You’re Rocking the Boat.”

The differences in highlighting a soloist in proscenium versus in the round will also affect the choreography. In a proscenium setting, the lead performer may be part of a group, but he or she may also stand out while the ensemble becomes background. In the number “Take Back Your Mink,” the actress playing Adelaide was able to do featured choreography that differed from the back-up steps of the girls that were arranged in a “V” formation behind her (see Figure 15). In the arena staging, however, the soloist becomes the centerpiece of the entire picture, making it harder to differ movements. When “Take Back Your Mink” was performed in the round, Adelaide was standing on a level center stage while the girls surrounded her (see Figure 16). Because she was fully incorporated into the image the audience saw, she had to do the same choreography as the other girls. Solo movements would not have read as clearly.

Figure 15. Isolating a soloist in proscenium.
When a performer is alone on a proscenium stage, he or she undoubtedly has strength standing center or down center. During Adelaide’s reprise of “Adelaide’s Lament,” there was no movement. She stood downstage center, isolated in a small pool of light, and exposed her true feelings. However, in the round, the areas of strength differ:

While center still holds the key spot in regard to relative strength for the single actor, the upstage to downstage axis is no longer axiomatic. Once the actor moves downstage, he becomes relatively weaker. This phenomenon is due to another cause which we might call “frontality,” i.e., the greater the portion of the audience able to see the full front of an actor, the stronger he appears. (Atkins 233)

When the reprise of “Adelaide’s Lament” was staged in the round, it was more powerful to place her center stage, but she had to continually change her body angle so that all the audience sections could see her face. This convention of the soloist facing various directions is necessary any time one person is positioned center stage for a long period of time. These changes of orientation must be dramatically motivated, occurring at a change of beat or tactic:

Experienced actors in this stage form learn to find ways to incorporate subtle turns into their performance, so as to keep themselves in a continual ‘opening up’ to the different sides of the audience. If subtle turning changes of position are integrated with and arise from changes in the character’s thinking or responding to what he hears on the stage, then the effect is invariably much more organic and thus not overtly noticeable to the audience as artifice. (Hodge and McLain 196)

The most compelling way to accomplish these shifts is to have the performer face an audience section and then turn to the audience section directly opposite. For the third move, he or she chooses which of the two remaining sides to face, and then finally sings to the remaining opposite audience section. By playing to the opposing sections and not just
revolving in a circle, no one spectator goes for too long without being able to see the singer’s face.

The question of symmetry versus asymmetry is one that every director and choreographer asks when creating stage pictures. The stage should be balanced, but too much symmetry often feels forced and unrealistic:

There are two types of balance: symmetrical and asymmetrical. In symmetrical balance the right side of the stage up to an imaginary center line looks just like the other half from the center line to the left . . . Although there may be times when you want symmetry onstage, it may seem too contrived and artificial for scenes in which you want more natural-looking arrangements. Most of the time stage directors use many asymmetrical combinations to provide a balanced look without symmetry. Both halves of the stage will be different, but the audience will feel that there is a visual balance – that one side of the stage is equal in emphatic weight to the other side. (Novak and Novak 81)

The concept of asymmetry was used in the proscenium staging of the Havana Sequence to create a new environment. The Havana Sequence is a progression of scene, song, and dance that occurs when the characters of Sky and Sarah travel to Cuba. The action is constantly split between the scene going on with Sarah and Sky, and the dancers in the club. When the sequence was staged in proscenium, the table where the scene was taking place was stage left. Therefore, the center for the dancers was moved more stage right. This contrasted with all the previous dance numbers that took place in New York City and were centered on center stage. This change of axis onstage helped to portray the story of Sky and Sarah being knocked off the axis of their normal world, New York City. Only in this new, exotic world are they able to fall in love. While the stage was asymmetrical, the table on stage left and the dancers on stage right kept a balance. The change of center for the dancers in Havana mirrored the ideas of avant-garde choreographer Merce Cunningham, who played with changing the central focus. “Merce Cunningham revolutionized the traditional notion that the centre of the action is in the centre of the stage. In his works, the centre of the action can be anywhere on the stage and, indeed, may have several centers focused simultaneously” (Cooper 25).

When working in the round, symmetry is no longer gauged on a two-dimensional plane with a line down the middle. Rather, it is viewed three-dimensionally, initiating at the central nucleus and emanating outward. “The center of focus on [an arena] stage becomes the nucleus about which everything moves. Thus the figure at center is more static than the
figures about him, who are viewed as ‘ground.’ Focus can then be shifted quite easily by selecting the figure about whom the ground will move” (Atkins 234).

In communicating to the audience through dance, stage pictures and formations are extremely important tools. However, especially in the round, they must constantly evolve. Transitions are equally vital in telling a clear story. Like formations, transitional methods will also vary depending on the performance space configuration.
CHAPTER 4

MOVEMENT PATTERNS

Within a choreographic routine, transitions are the movement from one composition to the next. It is important in a number to find a balance between allowing a picture or formation to register while still having enough variation to avoid monotony:

If we look at any design for a long while, the initial interest is bound to fade and the eye seeks some change, conversely, abrupt changes in visual impact lead to a sense of bewilderment. The choreographer has to take both these factors into account in order to achieve that balance which will keep the spectator’s attention.

(Sunderland and Pickering 91)

In looking at transitions performed on a proscenium stage versus an arena stage, these movement patterns differ in rate and quality.

When staging in the round, formations must constantly change to make sure that each audience member is able to see and absorb what is occurring onstage:

The spatial possibilities in the use of [theatre in the round] are inherently fluid . . . While the fluidity of in the round allows for multiple focus and for high-paced productions, it also precludes actors sitting or standing in the same place for long periods. Actors cannot stay still for long, as they will have their back to at least part of the audience. (Baldwin 19)

Most formations cut off a clear view to someone in the audience, so they must continually adjust and evolve. In the proscenium, while change is important, it should not happen too quickly or there is no time for a formation to be established and its effect fully realized.

When Guys and Dolls production numbers were adapted from the round to proscenium, the number of formation transitions was greatly reduced and stage pictures were held for a longer length of time. For example, in the number “Take Back Your Mink,” Adelaide sings the entire first section as a solo. In the first production done in the round, Adelaide stood on a round platform center stage. The ensemble girls started in four groups, one for each audience section, then moved to a straight line from vom 3 to vom 6 that rotated to vom 9 and 12. Finally, they ended up in a circle surrounding Adelaide. That totaled four formations within the first thirty bars of Adelaide’s song. In the second production, adapted for a proscenium theatre, most of the choreography remained the same, but the ensemble girls were in “V”
formation for the entire first section, changing only the direction in which they were facing. The stillness worked well because the women were supposed to appear statuesque. This adaptation process made me examine some of my choreographic tendencies. I realized that I frequently create dances with large numbers of transitions. This is because most of my early choreographic experience was in arena staging. As a result, when choreographing for proscenium theatres, I must make a conscious effort to scale back the number of transitions so the dances don’t look too frenetic.

When fashioning transitions, the stage space not only dictates “when,” but also “how.” Different crossing patterns carry different dramatic weight depending on the stage configuration. “Before starting to choreograph, you should make an exhaustive exploration of your performance space, and assess how best to utilise [sic] its advantages and minimise [sic] its weak points” (Cooper 24). On a proscenium stage, diagonals are the longest and strongest lines to on which to cross. This is because the performer is traveling horizontally as well as vertically, creating length and depth at the same time. When an actor moves from upstage right to downstage left, it makes a strong statement and draws the audience’s eye. Horizontal crosses are also compelling, but the flatness of a cross moving parallel with the proscenium arch can grow monotonous. Without the benefit of depth, a two-dimensional, horizontal cross starts to become aimless pacing if it is not used specifically and economically. There are several theories on the power of traveling from stage right to stage left and vice versa. Many believe that because Americans read from left to right, a cross from stage right to stage left is more accessible and natural to an audience. “Some choreographers claim that because we read from left to right an entrance from stage right is both more noticeable and capable of achieving an illusion of great speed, as it is the usual way in which we watch activity” (Sunderland and Pickering 97). This is also why some choreographers use a stage left entrance when they want to surprise or shock the audience.

There are those who argue that a move heading directly downstage also carries much weight. “It is very powerful, for example, to advance from an upstage position directly downstage toward the audience, because the dancer becomes visually larger while traveling on this path” (Minton 47). In my experience, however, a cross that creates depth alone on a proscenium stage, particularly one that is not raked, is the hardest to read from the house. In creating movement for the number “Marry the Man Today,” I found that when the two ladies
crossed directly downstage, the movement did not have the power I was intending. This was also true in the “Crapshooters’ Ballet.” Initially, two rollers slid from upstage to downstage, but I changed it from stage right to stage left because it had more visual impact. The horizontal trajectory was also stronger because the audience could more clearly witness the level change of the dancers from standing to sliding across the floor.

When choreographing in the round, the audience no longer observes an enclosed picture, but rather surrounds the action. They become part of the performance in two major ways. The first is that a spectator will not only be able to watch the activity onstage, but also the audience members seated on the opposite side. Therefore, the audience can witness the characters’ journeys as well as the impact of those journeys on fellow audience members. Secondly, spectators become involved in the story, and sometimes the action onstage affects the audience in the same way as the characters. For example, in the “Crapshooters’ Ballet,” the men faced off in a dance challenge, standing on opposite sides of the stage and facing their opponents. Because all audience members were positioned behind one of the teams, the audience also became divided, visually siding with the group of men standing before them. Therefore, in theatre-in-the-round, the role of the audience changes from passive spectator to active participant.

This involvement changes the way onstage crosses affect the audience. If one character charges at another onstage, the moving performer is not only advancing towards a fellow actor, but also towards the spectators seated behind that actor. Similar to the proscenium stage, diagonal lines carry the most power. “Arena staging should be designed and blocked on the diagonals . . . that extend from the vomitories” (Kirk and Bellas 99). However, in central staging, diagonal crosses from one aisle to another give the feeling that the dancers are traveling through the audience. In the “Crapshooters’ Ballet,” one group of rollers glided from vom 3 to vom 9. Then suddenly another group of rollers leapt from vom 6 to vom 12. These constant changes of direction allowed for an exciting build in the number.

It is an established perception that a character that crosses in a straight line has a strong power of intention. One that moves in a curved pattern is less determined. “Dancers who execute movement in straight paths appear strong and direct . . . Curved pathways lack the strength of movement performed in straight paths; when a performer follows a curved
pathway, the body facing changes constantly, and the visual impression is less forceful” (Minton 47-48). This weakness of the curved line on a proscenium stage is exactly what makes it an effective and powerful movement in theatre-in-the-round. Because the angle of the body is constantly changing, more people are able to see the performer’s face and the surrounding audience can observe the choreography from all angles. “[In arena staging], movements that curve or arc through the space . . . tend to work well in comparison to straight lines because the curve opens up the face of the actor to more of the audience” (Hodge and McLain 196). Using a curved line to transition from one formation to another is also a tool in proscenium theatre to make the stage look bigger, because the dancer must traverse more ground to reach his or her final destination.

When considering the effectiveness of depth and width in transitional crosses, one must also examine the influence of height. Level creates a whole new plane on which dancers travel, opening up new movement possibilities. Level on a proscenium stage creates visual variation and can help to focus the audience’s attention. In arena staging, level becomes even more crucial; not only for focus and variety, but also to make sure that every audience member retains a clear view of the important action onstage.

Along with transitions, movement patterns also include the shape and direction through which dancers travel onstage. In a dance sequence, the choreographer may create visual variation on a proscenium stage by having multiple horizontal lines moving in opposite directions. The same cinematic swiping action is achieved in arena staging by using a circle. The circle has been discussed as a formation, but dancers traveling around in a circle offer an entirely new level of visual interest. In the round, it is especially exciting to have two circles, one inside the other, traveling in opposite directions. “The complexity and tension lacking within a single circle can, to some extent, be re-established by introducing a number of circles. A very attractive effect will result from the interlinking of such circles when travelling in opposite directions” (Sunderland and Pickering 79). This effect was used at the very end of the “Crapshooters’ Ballet” as ten men dragged in one direction and ten men “chassed” the other way. At the end of “Sit Down You’re Rocking the Boat,” three overlapping circles marched in opposite directions as people in the center marched up and over the desk, creating levels. This combination of movement and level resulted in a thrilling finale to the large production number.
One movement pattern that is much more suited to the proscenium stage is having multiple vertical lines that travel and cross each other. Because the audience is able to see the entire picture from the front, the design of straight lines and the militaristic movement sequences of precision dancing are compelling. In theatre-in-the-round, these straight lines lose impact because viewers are seeing them from an angle. Another pattern that is more successful in proscenium is an advance. This describes a movement where dancers continue to get closer to one central location or character. For example, in the number “Luck Be a Lady,” the ensemble of gangsters performed three lunges, advancing closer to Sky Masterson each time. When the number was choreographed in a proscenium configuration, Sky stood center stage and the male dancers, spread along the perimeter, came in during the lunges to create a semi-circle around him. In the round, advances are ineffectual because as a group of performers gets closer to a location or central character, they block the view of the audience. When the same moment in “Luck Be a Lady” was choreographed in the round, the ensemble of men started in the voms with Sky Masterson center stage. They advanced closer to Sky, coming onto the playing space. However, the power of this move was negated by the fact that the men immediately had to retreat back to the voms so the audience could still view Sky. An advance can be successful in the round if level is added. Two ways to accomplish level are to place the main action up on a platform or have the advancing dancers crouch down.

There are also movement patterns that are fundamentally successful in a circular space. For instance, theatre in the round, particularly when the stage is low and the audience is raked up above it, is conducive to kaleidoscope effects. Dancers move like spokes of a wheel, traveling in and away from center. These movements are reminiscent of Busby Berkeley films where moments in the dance sequences were shot from overhead. Additionally, the pattern of a line dance was built around the notion of performing in the round, because the same sequence of steps is repeated in all four directions. The wave is another pattern that resonates in the round. This progression is a contagion where performers, in a circular formation, execute a movement, such as raising their arms, in sequence, one after the other. For many, this pattern evokes images of sporting events, where a wave of people standing travels around the sports arena. In arena staging, this pattern follows the shape of the stage, and the audience, equidistant to each part of the wave,
is included in the circle. The wave was used successfully when the production number “Sit
Down You’re Rocking the Boat” was staged in the round. While telling his story, Nicely-
Nicely stood on top of a desk center stage, and the rest of the company created a circle
surrounding him. As he sang about a wave that washed him overboard, the ensemble raised
their arms and leaned back one at a time. Then as Nicely-Nicely recalled that he sank,
everyone suddenly brought his or her arms down together, breaking the wave pattern. This
movement progression is not as effective in proscenium, because the audience is excluded
from the shape. The upstage side of the circle is further away from the spectators, so the
movement loses impact when it travels around.

As a choreographer devises steps for a group of dancers, the question of opposition is
one he or she must consider. Within the picture frame of the proscenium arch,
choreographers often create variation by having dancers stage left of center perform the same
movements as the dancers stage right of center, but in the opposite direction. If stage left
reaches out with the left hand, stage right reaches out with the right hand. Often times this
opposition creates interesting compositions that breathe a new life into the dance steps. In
the round, however, opposition is not as effective or as necessary for visual variance.
Because each audience member is seeing the dance from a different angle, the point of view
is constantly shifting. The dancers are changing what side of the audience they are facing
and stage pictures continuously transform, so there is less need to create distinctions within
the steps themselves. Opposition can even become distracting and confusing in this stage
configuration. Spectators do not all see the same composition, so the pattern of opposition is
lost.

After realizing that the different stage orientations have different strengths and
weaknesses in movement patterns, it becomes clear that it is impossible to exactly replicate a
dance sequence in different venues. When first adapting the opening dance section to the
Havana Sequence from arena staging to a proscenium stage, I attempted to use the exact
same choreography. This was unsuccessful because the choreography contained too many
traveling steps. The arena stage offered more space to travel from aisle to aisle or around the
circle. On the proscenium stage, however, the space between upstage and downstage was
extremely limiting. As a result, the choreography had to be modified to stay more localized.
The original routine also had constant changes of direction to open the dancers up to the
various audience sectors. These moves were adjusted so the dancers could face front the entire time.

No matter what movement pattern is being executed in any stage configuration, it must always be motivated by the intentions of the characters. Transitions must occur with a change in tactic or dramatic action. This is how the choreography transforms from a progression of random steps to movements that tell a story.
CHAPTER 5

TELLING THE STORY

In the introduction to *Choreographing the Stage Musical*, authors Margot Sunderland and Ken Pickering list some important roles that choreography fulfills in a musical:

1. To generate energy
2. To express moods and heighten feeling states
3. To complement other media [such as music or lyrics]
4. To change atmosphere
5. To bring out humour
6. To entertain
7. To add spectacle
8. To display costume
9. To further relationships
10. To color characterization
11. To convey physical states such as forms of aggression and affection
12. To display ritual and celebration
13. To manipulate time: accelerate it or slow it down or suspend it
14. To heighten suspense
15. To portray fantasy and fantasy worlds such as dreams, the unconscious
16. To further the plot (11)

The successful accomplishment of these roles through choreography is largely affected by the stage space. This chapter will focus on how to achieve the last objective: to further the plot.

Before 1936, dance in musical theatre was largely used as pure entertainment. Dances were often created simply for dance’s sake, without any connection to the story. In 1936, George Balanchine explored dance’s capacity to advance the plot of *On Your Toes*. During the ballet, “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue,” the character of Phil must continue to dance in order to stay alive. If he stops dancing, the two thugs waiting in the wings will murder him. Agnes de Mille conceived the convention of a dream ballet, and used it to further the
plot of *Oklahoma!* in 1943. Just before the ballet, the character of Laurey struggles to decide whether to attend the box social with Jud or Curley. In the 15-minute dance sequence, often referred to as “Laurey Makes Up Her Mind,” Laurey first dreams about what it would be like to marry Curley. Then her dream turns sinister as Jud appears and murders Curley, taking Laurey for himself. Unable to escape, Laurey must live in Jud’s dark fantasy world. After waking from her nightmare, Laurey makes a crucial decision; she realizes that Curley is the man she loves, but she must go to the social with Jud for fear of what he might do if she doesn’t. Therefore, the dream ballet forwards the plot. As a result of these pioneers, dance has become a fundamental storytelling tool in the fully integrated musical.

Michael Kidd, the original choreographer of *Guys and Dolls*, was a master of storytelling and style. His dances had an athletic energy that defined them specifically as Kidd choreography, but more importantly, his choreography encompassed narrative sequences that were character driven. In an interview for the series “Conversations with Master Choreographers,” Michael Kidd asserted that when creating dance numbers, he always started by asking questions:

I learned over the years to ask myself some questions. What’s it about? Who are the people in it? What kind of people are they? How do they move? What is their relationship to one another, and is there an emotional basis to the scene? Why are they dancing? I’ve tried to use the dancers, not primarily as dancers, but primarily as people, as individuals, who dance to express themselves. (Kidd 10)

When describing his work method, he stated, “My usual way of operating is to work with an existing character, or a plot line which I try to fill in and heighten with emotional dance sequences to progress the story” (Kidd 13).

Kidd’s choreography for *Guys and Dolls* took the activities of Runyon’s criminal denizens and turned them into dance by enlarging and abstracting them. In the “Crapshooters’ Ballet,” a number that was Kidd’s creation, everyone onstage is a character with a motivation. The dance tells the story of an underground crap game, and the tension in the movement demonstrates the heightened stakes. In the Hot Box numbers, the dance is justified because the women are performing in a club, but Kidd takes the storytelling one step further. For example, in the number, “Take Back Your Mink,” the women strip off all their expensive clothes, and then dance, while still reaching back for their fur and diamonds. At the end, the newly liberated women start strutting offstage, but in the final moments run back to collect the valuable items exclaiming, “Well? Wouldn’t you?” (Swerling and Burrows 79).
In *Guys and Dolls*, Kidd’s choreography succeeded in telling the story while also developing rich characters through movement that blended perfectly with Frank Loesser’s music and lyrics and Abe Burrow’s dialogue. Burrows claimed this integration as a reason for the show’s success: “Nothing is in there that doesn’t belong. There are no love ballads which are written in a different language from the dialogue. When a mug sings a love song, it’s a mug type love song. The dances are strictly in character. There’s a crap game ballet that looks like a crap game. A real Runyon crap game. In this show we didn’t care about how a single number or scene would go. We were about the whole show and nothing went in unless it fit” (qtd. in Miller 61).

Following the same ideology as Michael Kidd, whenever choreographing a production number, I start by asking myself questions: What is the story being told in this sequence? What does the audience need to see in order for them to follow the story? In *Guys and Dolls*, the Havana Sequence is a progression of scene, song, and dance where the characters of Sky and Sarah travel to Havana. Following an afternoon of sightseeing, Sky takes Sarah to a nightclub, and she becomes tipsy after having several “Cuban milkshakes“ called “Dulce de Leche” containing a secret ingredient: Bacardi rum. Sarah begins to let down her hair for the first time and joins in the festive dancing. When another dancer makes eyes at Sky, Sarah starts a brawl that involves the whole nightclub, and in a moment of triumph, she knocks out the offending dancer with a liquor bottle. From the moment that Sarah starts dancing, the rest of the plot is revealed through movement. This sequence is crucial to the musical, because it is only when Sky and Sarah leave New York and travel to the “green world” that they are able to show their true selves and fall in love. This mirrors Northrop Frye’s Green World Theory for Shakespearean comedies. The “green world” refers to the pastoral settings where characters must travel to in order to have life-altering experiences. “Thus the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world” (Frye 182). In *Guys and Dolls*, this lively, earthly setting is represented by Havana, which is juxtaposed with the New York City setting of the rest of the play.

When choreographing in the round, these plot-advancing sequences can be daunting. It is hard to control the audience’s focus on a specific series of events when action is taking
place on other parts of the stage. In the original Broadway production of *Guys and Dolls*, Jo Mielziner’s groundbreaking scenery helped to tell the story, create mood, and establish location in the Havana number. Mielziner was an innovator in creating sets that flowed seamlessly and eliminated the need for long pauses in set changes. He claimed these advances helped “to overcome the episodic and rigid format of writing stories in acts and scenes as opposed to employing the technique of connected thoughts and freedom of movement enjoyed by such mediums as the motion pictures” (Stempel 734). These scenic innovations allowed the characters to travel to various locations without having to pause for laborious set changes. When working on arena stages, lavish scenery is not viable because it would block the view of the audience. Therefore, in the Havana Sequence, the dancers in the nightclub are needed to establish setting, atmosphere, and story; but the audience must still be able to follow the scene between Sky and Sarah. My first solution was to use dancers in the beginning sections of the scene as cinematic swipes, representing a change in location or the passage of time. The moments of dance were interspersed with the dialogue so that the action jumped from dance to scene continually. Then once Sarah joined in the dance, movements were designed to manipulate focus so the spectators’ eye followed the important storyline. Examining and dissecting the Havana Sequence as it was choreographed in the round illustrates the tools used to tell the story through dance on an arena stage. This analysis can be compared with the DVD companion video of the sequence. See Figure 17 below for a diagram of the stage space.

![Figure 17. Stage layout of the Jerry Herman Ring Theatre.](image-url)
As the drums begin, the lights lower and the lead Havana couple enters from vom 12 in costumes that glow under the black light. The dance vocabulary for this scene is drawn from Latin partner dances such as the salsa, the mambo, the tango, and the samba as a way to transport the audience to Cuba. The lead couple begins to dance, constantly changing their body angles so they open up to all sectors of the audience. Two more couples enter, and the three pairs make a diagonal line from audience section A to audience section C. As Sky and Sarah enter from vom 9, each couple performs an individual lift. Sky and Sarah take notice and walk to vom 6, while all three couples start dancing in unison. Then the dancing couples run offstage as Sky and Sarah begin their sightseeing. They find their first historic monument while in vom 6. Then they run center stage where the second landmark is in the direction of vom 3. Finally, they turn around to see the sights out in vom 9. These changes of direction signify a change in location. While the main action is taking place onstage, there are couples in the voms performing a simplified version of the salsa. This background movement creates an atmosphere that surrounds the audience, so the spectators feel as though they are also in the exotic location.

At the same time Sky and Sarah are sightseeing center stage, their table at the nightclub is being set up in vom 6. They head to the table and order food. Then the second dance sequence begins. Three couples tango in from the three open entrances and pass through each other to dance in a triangle formation. By the time they salsa back onstage, the waiter has brought Sky and Sarah their food. This second sequence represents a passage of time. Then Sky orders them drinks, which Sarah has no idea contain alcohol. Right after Sky and Sarah place their drink order, the lead female Havana dancer enters from vom 12 with two boys, and charges straight at Sky as she is lifted into the air. This establishes that she has her eye on Sky. Because the audience is surrounding the action, it feels as though she is charging towards the spectators as well, drawing the attention of everyone in the club. The dancer then takes center stage to perform her seduction dance. She takes one last glance at Sky before running into a star lift with the male dancer waiting for her in vom 12. The entire audience is watching her when Sarah suddenly begins talking again. This change of focus mirrors what is going on in Sky’s mind, as he gets caught up watching the lead female Havana dancer, but is then jolted back to his conversation with Sarah, who decides she wants another “milkshake.”
Now the Havana dancers challenge each other: girls versus boys. The challenge dance is a classic convention of musical theatre dance and is used often to build a number or create excitement and tension. When a challenge dance is performed in the round, it generates additional stimulation because the audience becomes a part of the action. In this fourth dance section of the Havana sequence, the girls enter from vom 3 while the boys enter from vom 9, and they dance facing their opponents. The audience also faces off, one half siding with the women and the other half siding with the men. The challenge ends with the dancers coupling up and running off together. While this dancing is taking place onstage, it draws the audience’s attention so no one notices that six more beverages are added to Sky and Sarah’s table. When the focus is shifted back to the scene, the viewers realize that time has passed and Sarah is now extremely tipsy. With her inhibitions lowered, Sarah jumps to her feet and, inspired by the music, starts gyrating her hips. The three male dancers pull her onto the floor and join in the hip swaying. The three men conga Sarah to vom 12 and then spin her one by one, leading her all the way across the stage. The spectators’ eye follows Sarah, and when she ends up facing vom 6, the audience then sees what Sarah sees: the lead female dancer seducing Sky. This manipulation of the audience’s focus from observer to her point of view helps the audience understand the story being told through dance.

As Sarah reaches out to grab the lead female dancer away from Sky, she is pulled in the opposite direction by a male dancer. Four couples, including Sky partnered with the lead female dancer and Sarah with her partner, dance the final climactic tango. The entire time, Sarah keeps reaching for Sky, but her dance partner continues to dip and lift her away. Sky and the lead dancer end in vom 12 and Sarah ends in vom 6. All other dancers end in voms 3 and 9 where tables of club patrons have been added, emptying the stage space so the audience is able to clearly see the following action. Sarah dashes across the stage, taps the lead dancer on the shoulder, and slaps her. As Sarah walks back triumphantly, the female dancer pulls her hair. This incites the other club patrons to start fighting, as Sarah and the dancer are pulled apart in fireman carries. The lifts create a level, so the viewers can still track Sarah and the lead dancer amidst the other brawling. In the final moment, the lead dancer rushes toward Sarah, who has been placed standing on top of her chair. Everyone else onstage freezes mid-scuffle, throwing their focus to Sarah as she picks up a bottle on the table and knocks the lead dancer out. The stage goes black signifying the end of the scene.
By examining the Havana sequence, it is apparent how dance was used to create atmosphere, demonstrate changes of location and passage of time, reveal the inner thoughts of the character, manipulate the audience’s focus, and, most importantly, further the plot. When this number was adapted to a proscenium stage, some of the elements of storytelling were easier than they were in the round. However, other aspects were not as effective. In the round, the stage was a blank canvas and the dancers had plenty of room to travel and dance expansively. When the production was mounted in a proscenium theatre, the New York locations were created with an immobile unit set. Therefore, I was forced to stage the entire Havana Sequence in front of a painted drop that severely limited the amount of dancing space, especially since the dancers also had to avoid the cutout downstage center for the orchestra (see Figure 18). Because the spectators were watching the action from the front instead of surrounding the action, the imaginary fourth wall separating the stage and the audience compromised the inclusion of the spectators in the environment of the nightclub.

![Figure 18. Stage layout for the Havana Sequence in proscenium.](image)

There were some moments that were more successful in the proscenium staging. Because the scene between Sky and Sarah was fully visible by everyone, dancing could be continued onstage during the dialogue without blocking the audience’s view of the important action. This constant movement allowed the exotic atmosphere of Havana to always be present, and the audience could more clearly see how the dance influenced Sarah’s behavior. Also, while the charge of the lead Havana dancer horizontally towards Sky was not as visually powerful, the grand lift at the end of her solo dance sequence made a bigger impact because, as the choreographer, I had the ability to choose the best angle from which the audience would observe it. Finally, when Sarah was pulled away by her male dancer and
continued to reach for Sky while being dipped and twirled, the comedy in this situation was more apparent because the audience could visually track Sky and Sarah side by side.

In an article entitled “Directing for the Open Space,” author Irvin J. Atkins hypothesizes the best way to approach staging a show in the round:

The focus of audience attention on the proscenium stage is usually controlled through movement, composition, and picturization. As used on the proscenium stage these terms refer to pictorial qualities. The front-of-the-stage director blocks his show looking straight onto the stage from center, then adjusting slightly for extreme sightlines. In transferring to the peninsular or round . . . a better result can be obtained through a shift of directorial perspective from the objective onlooker to the subjective center of the particular grouping. (Atkins 233-234)

Atkins claims that while a director or choreographer works in proscenium staging by looking straight at the picture from the front, when creating images for theatre-in-the-round, it is more beneficial for the director or choreographer to think not as an audience member, but rather as a subject onstage, becoming aware of what is being projected to the onlooker and in what direction. Then creators have the ability to sit in various parts of the theatre and view their work from multiple perspectives:

Theatre-in-the-round is essentially a plastic, sculptural medium. Actors move in a completely open space and must be keenly aware that their expressiveness cannot be projected simply in one direction. Directors and designers are forced to see in three dimensions rather than two. A director who masters theatre-in-the-round can assess a scene or performance from a variety of visual perspectives. (Black 140)

This method is incredibly beneficial in making sure that all audience members are able to follow the story being told. It can also be useful when creating musical staging or choreographing routines that contain large amounts of physical comedy.
CHAPTER 6

MUSICAL STAGING AND COMEDIC DEVICES

Often times, the choreographer is responsible not just for dance sequences, but also for the musical staging of songs. Actors are given places to move onstage and sometimes specific gestures to emphasize a lyric or a motivation. When two or more people are sharing the stage, it is important to create focus and dominance so the audience is able to follow the action. Also, many times within a song or dance number, the situation calls for physical comedy. These are all situations that need to be addressed differently depending on the stage orientation.

When staging a duet, it is important to consider the principles of focus and dominance, and how they work to control the audience’s attention:

On the stage, relationships among characters are heightened because of the perspective afforded the audience. Two important factors in controlling the audience’s response to action are dominance and focus. Dominance refers to the sense of strength or power a character receives from his position on stage in relation to other characters. Generally, the character who is in the upstage position will have a sense of dominance or strength, while the downstage character will feel vulnerable or weak . . . Focus refers to the point of attention of an audience. Although the character who has dominance most often has focus, dominance and focus are not the same thing. (Kirk and Bellas 72-73)

A choreographer must decide which singer should have the most focus, or if the characters are sharing the attention equally. The following theory addresses these questions when staging two performers in a proscenium theatre.

If two standing characters are sharing a scene and both are equally important, they should usually be in opposite one-quarter or profile positions in the same plane . . . With two standing actors, the stage director may want the character who has important dialogue or business to have more emphasis than the other. You may then direct the emphatic character to take the stage by moving slightly upstage of the other person and assuming a one-quarter or full front position while the other person gives the stage by taking a three-quarter or full back position. (Novak and Novak 82)

In theatre-in-the-round, however, these methods for creating visual emphasis differ. The singer must continue to move or change direction so everyone in the audience sees his or her
face. Also, if two actors get too close to each other, the audience is blocked from viewing the interaction.

In [theatre-in-the-round], compositions that become too small and ‘knotted’ or closed off on themselves will be difficult for audiences to see into, essentially because the actors wind up blocking off each other from the lines of vision from various sectors of the audience. While still being sensitive to the verisimilitude required, it is important to keep the compositions large enough and open enough (often by having actors offset each other slightly rather than by facing each other nose-to-nose) to allow for audience members to see into the composition without actors’ faces being blocked. (Hodge and McLain 196)

One way to open up a duet for the audience is to place the two actors at an angle instead of singing directly towards each other. This technique was used in the number “Marry the Man Today.” The characters of Adelaide and Sarah sat on newspaper stacks that were on a diagonal. Adelaide’s body faced vom 6 while Sarah’s body faced the opposite vom 12. Then their focus was directed over the shoulder so they could connect with their fellow actor while still being visible at a multitude of angles. The round offers audience members a variety of character perspectives, because some are watching the dominant action, while others are viewing the reactions of the secondary character. When the performers change body angles, these audience focuses also switch, and spectators become more deeply involved in the cat and mouse game occurring onstage. “On a central stage, action and reaction are both important. The audience watches both characters in a [duet]. The central stage can hardly provide an upstage or other dominant position, and the smallness of the stage enables the audience to take in both characters” (Joseph 125).

During a duet, there must be distance between the singers, but the choreographer must be keenly aware of the tension being created. If performers are too close or too far away, the tension dissipates. In the round, the perfect distance to create tension is different than on a proscenium stage. The actors must stay further apart so as not to block the audience’s view, which might seem contrived during intimate moments. However, because the audience is more directly drawn into the action, it is possible to maintain tension even as actors stand at greater distances.

Some other techniques for staging a duet in the round include placing the actors in opposite voms so that there is distance between them, or keeping one singer stationary center stage while the other travels in a circle from vom to vom. Usually the actor singing is the one shifting, and the one listening remains still. “Normally, an actor moves when speaking
and stands still when listening to others. Both speaking and moving are attention-getters, so it is better to have one character do both than to split the attention between two actors” (Novak and Novak 82). This principle can be reversed if the action the silent character is performing is more important to the story than the lyrics that are being sung, but this is rarely the case. Even though more movement is usually necessary when staging in the round, all the shifts in position must still be motivated by the characters’ actions or motivations. “All movement must be appropriate for each character, the situation, the mood, and style of the show, and it must be motivated – that is, there must be a purpose, a reason for every move” (Novak and Novak 82).

These two techniques were extremely useful in staging the number “If I Were a Bell.” During this song, Sarah is slightly tipsy, and her liquid courage allows her to express how much she has enjoyed Sky’s company. When the number was staged in the round, Sky stood center stage while Sarah danced from vom to vom, coming center to meet Sky for moments of physical contact such as a dip or a hug. The openness of the arena stage allowed the actress playing Sarah to express her newfound emotional freedom through abandoned movement, but the voms gave her guideposts where she could find moments of stillness. When the number was restaged for the proscenium theatre, almost the exact same staging was used, but it did not elicit the same feeling of freedom. The actress playing Sarah had less options to explore and was constrained to pacing back and forth horizontally from stage left to stage right. Also, without voms grounding her, she had much more difficulty finding moments of stillness, and it resulted in the actress wandering unnecessarily.

In staging a trio, the principle for placement in proscenium is the same as arena staging: a triangular formation allows focus to be shared without creating the monotony of a straight line. “When blocking three or more performers, the stage director will sometimes use triangular arrangements with the emphatic person at the upstage apex, speaking to those who are downstage. The emphatic person may also be at a downstage apex if he or she does not have to look at the others” (Novak and Novak 83). In the round, the actors may either face each other, allowing space for the audience to see, or they can all face out. This concept was applied when staging the beginning of the production number “Oldest Established.” During the verse of the song, the characters of Nathan Detroit, Benny Southstreet, and Nicely-Nicely Johnson are trying to think of a place to hold their floating crap game. In
proscenium, the three actors stood in a triangle formation while trading ideas, singing straight out to the audience for the final phrase. The same was true in the round, except they kept trading positions within the triangle as new ideas came so that every audience member had a chance to see each of the three men. Then when the other crapshooters entered, they began circling the stationary trio in the center. This illustrated the fact that the gangsters traveling along the perimeter were unaware of the conflict happening between the three lead characters.

Many times in musical theatre, comedy is drawn from devices that have proven to be surefire ways of supplying laughs for hundreds of years. Some comedic bits still used today date back to the comedies of Ancient Greece or the lazzı of Commedia dell’Arte.

There are old comic devices that have been used for centuries that are still good at getting laughs, such as the *take* or *slow take*. This is done usually with the comedian looking out at the audience as he or she slowly realizes what has been said or done. A *double take* is a variation of this with the comic looking at something or someone, then looking away, then realizing what he has seen or heard, and quickly looking back. A *running gag* is comic business that is repeated throughout the musical. *Deadpanning* is getting laughs through using no facial expressions, while *mugging* is just the opposite – using excessive, exaggerated expressions. *Chasing, tripping, slipping, and hitting* are also old farcical tricks to get laughs. (Novak and Novak 86)

These comedic devices, or “shtick,” often center on physical comedy – some picture that creates a funny situation, or reveals the inner thoughts of a character to the audience. They were the basis for many of the comedy acts in vaudeville. Vaudevillian bits, or gags, were developed, and usually were guaranteed to amuse the audience. Since the vaudeville houses were all proscenium theatres, and often the comedy acts were performed “in one,” or in front of the main curtain, these bits were created with the intention that they would be viewed from a specific angle. The composition of the picture is what often times created the humor. Issues arise when trying to block physical comedy in the round, because the audience is viewing a composition from many different angles.

In *Guys and Dolls*, the characters of Benny Southstreet and Nicely-Nicely Johnson are modeled after the comedy duos of vaudeville, such as Weber and Fields, and later of film and television, such as Abbott and Costello and Laurel and Hardy. These comic foils used physical comedy and slapstick as a main source of humor. The titular song, “Guys and Dolls,” is performed by Benny and Nicely-Nicely and is a quintessential vaudevillian
number, full of shtick and comedic devices that are suited to a proscenium theatre. Because of this, it was extremely difficult to stage the song in the round. The two actors had to constantly shift orientation, trading positions or changing the direction they were facing, so that every sector of the audience could see both of them. They would execute quick, precise transitions from singing facing one another to sing out towards the audience, back to back. The sharpness of these movements aided in giving the number the polished slickness of a vaudeville routine. However, anytime I wanted a physical gag or a side-by-side dance step to read, I had to put both actors in one of the voms, creating a presentational vantage point to everyone in the audience. Traveling dance moves had more impact when both actors executed the step facing one way, and then switched directions instead of each individual facing opposite sides at the same time. This is because in this type of comedic duet, it is stronger to keep the pair working as a team and playing off of one another. The constant focus changes and running in and out of the voms created a bit of a frantic energy in the number. Luckily, the two actors were extremely skillful at making large but specific acting and physical choices. They were able to focus the energy of the frenetic transitions so the humor could resonate. When “Guys and Dolls” was restaged for the proscenium theatre, the staging was simpler and there was time for every picture or moment of shtick to land for the audience. The comedic business was much clearer and consequently more refined.

Many times in musicals, comedic business from the original production becomes integral to telling the story. Physical comedy might reveal an important fact about a character, forward the plot, or be a crucial element in the style of the piece. *Guys and Dolls* is an example of a musical where certain elements of shtick are necessary and expected. When staging physical comedy, there are benefits and disadvantages to each type of stage space. For example, in the production number “Oldest Established,” there is a physical comedy bit where a group of crapshooters stop to shine Nathan Detroit’s shoe. Then as Nathan puts his foot down, the surrounding men pat him on the back and send Nathan into a forward dive roll, landing on the floor with his feet out in front of him. This physical comedy helps to establish Nathan as a clown character: one who constantly tries to stand up straight while constantly getting knocked down. In the round, the picture of the men shining Nathan’s shoe had to be staged in one of the voms, and the surrounding crapshooters had to be positioned deep into the aisle so as to not block the spectator’s view. However, when
Nathan went to dive forward, he had the entire length of the stage to roll. On the proscenium stage, I was able to build the image of the shoeshine center stage without fear of other actors obstructing the audience’s view. Despite the strong stage picture, the shallow stage made it difficult for the actor playing Nathan to roll forward without fear of falling into the pit. In the proscenium theatre, for the final composition of the number, I was able to place all the men into a formation resembling a barbershop quartet, highlighting Nathan in the center. In the round, this image would not have been as successful. To create the same picture, I would have had to put all the actors in one vom, which would not have been a strong choice for a final formation. Instead, the men lined up across the stage and kneeled, throwing the focus to Nathan. A similar situation regarding the advantages of different stage configurations occurred when staging the number “Sue Me,” a faceoff between fiancés Nathan Detroit and Miss Adelaide. Many of the physical comedy bits, such as Adelaide hitting Nathan over the head with her purse as Nathan sinks lower with each blow, had a stronger visual impact when it was staged in proscenium. However, in the round, each spectator was able to take a side in the argument, giving the surrounding audience members their own role.

By knowing the strengths and weaknesses of each performance space, a choreographer is able to make informed choices on how to creatively craft stage pictures, design exciting movement patterns, effectively stage a song and address the needs of physical comedy. All these elements work together for the ultimate purpose of telling the story.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This investigation of how choreographic principles such as formations, movement patterns, telling the story, staging a song, and comedic devices are affected by a change in performance space has led to a number of conclusions. When transitioning from choreographing for a proscenium stage to creating movement for theatre in the round, a choreographer must change his or her mindset and adopt different techniques. The creator evolves from a painter to a sculptor and the role of the audience adapts from passive spectator to active participant. If a production is being remounted for various stage shapes, the choreographer must think of the subsequent productions as adaptations rather than direct translations, keeping the essence of the piece while breathing new life into it.

Performance spaces that deviate from the traditional proscenium layout offer new challenges that compel choreographers to conceive inventive and imaginative solutions. This process of finding innovative answers leads to the development of new creative styles. Therefore, a change in stage configuration allows theatre to evolve. Although theatre in the round is thought to be the oldest and most primal form of theatre, the majority of the art form has been stuck in a proscenium configuration for four centuries. It might take returning to theatre in the round for the art form to progress forward. This advancement may also arise by experimenting with stage orientations not yet attempted.

Margo Jones, who created the first professional theatre in the round in 1947, had many theories on the potential of arena theatres. In her book, Theatre-in-the-Round, written in 1951, Jones discusses the need in the United States for a national theatre. She offers theatre in the round as a solution because of its economic feasibility. She also conjectures that theatre in the round could allow more cities to open theatres, giving actors and writers more of a developmental process to hone their craft before advancing to Broadway. With today’s economic hardships, where theatres around the country continue to close, theatre in the round should be re-examined as an alternative method to keep the theatre tradition alive and carry it forward into the next century.
It is important to continue experimenting with open stages, like theatre in the round, because these spaces offer an intimate form of storytelling that cannot be experienced with television or film. Especially in the current, isolated, technology-driven culture of social networks, theatre in the round forces an audience to become more actively involved in the events unfolding onstage. Theatre in the round has the possibility to advance the art form while returning to the intimate goal of theatre: to elicit a response or emotional feeling from the audience. English novelist and playwright J. B. Priestley stated in *The Art of the Dramatist:*

> If I were beginning again, I would move in the opposite direction, towards more elaborate construction and even greater intimacy, taking a few characters through an intricate and ironic dance of relationships. In order to concentrate on ideas, words, subtly intimate acting, I would make a clean break with our picture-frame stage and all its clutter of canvas, paint, carpets and curtains, leaving designers and sets to the movies. I would write for a theatre-in-the-round, the opposite of the movies both in its cost and its art, the theatre where everything visual, except the close and vivid faces and figures of the players, is left to the imagination. For – and I say it for the last time – we cannot have everything at once, and too often when we think we are adding we are subtracting. To pretend about something, to use the imagination somewhere, heightens and deepens what I have called dramatic experience. (qtd. in Joseph 35-36)

The experience of staging *Guys and Dolls* in the round allowed me to delve into the imaginative dramatic experience for which Priestley longed. Then by adapting the production in diverse stage spaces, I became a more versatile choreographer. Even if a choreographer’s career mainly involves productions in a proscenium theatre, working in various spaces, such as central staging, helps the choreographer think about new and interesting stage patterns and shapes. When a choreographer becomes adept at creating movement in non-conventional spaces, he or she can use those principles to expand the boundaries of traditional proscenium theatre. Hopefully the techniques described in this paper will assist anyone attempting to choreograph in the round, preparing the reader for the many interesting and exciting challenges presented by this unique performance space.
WORKS CITED


APPENDIX

CURRENT ARENA THEATRES IN THE UNITED STATES
CURRENT ARENA THEATRES IN THE UNITED STATES *

The Allen Theatre (ACT) – Seattle, WA
The Andrews Theatre (The Irish Classical Theatre) – Buffalo, NY
The Arcadia Stage (Arden Theatre Company) – Philadelphia, PA
Arena Stage – Washington, D.C.
Artisan Center Theatre – Hurst, TX
Balch Arena Theatre (Tufts University) – Medford, MA
Bingham Theatre (Actors Theatre of Louisville) – Louisville, KY
Cape Cod Melody Tent – Hyannis, MA
Celebrity Theatre – Phoenix, AZ
Circle in the Square – New York, NY
Circle Theatre of Pacific Repertory Theatre – Carmel, CA
Colonial Players – Annapolis, MD
Fireside Theatre – Fort Atkinson, WI
The F. Otto Haas Stage (Arden Theatre Company) – Philadelphia, PA
Glendale Centre Theatre – Glendale, CA
Glenn Hughes Penthouse Theatre (University of Washington) – Seattle, WA
The Gym at Judson – New York, NY
Hale Centre Theatre – Gilbert, AZ
Hale Center Theater – Orem, UT
Hale Center Theater – West Valley City, UT
Hallberg Theatre (CSU Fullerton) – Fullerton, CA
Helzberg Hall (Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts) – Kansas City, MO
Heritage Forum – Anaheim, CA
Hugo V. Neuhaus Stage (Alley Theatre) – Houston, TX
Jerry Herman Ring Theatre (University of Miami) – Coral Gables, FL
Le Rêve Theatre (Wynn Casino) – Las Vegas, NV
Longstreet Theatre (University of South Carolina) – Columbia, SC
Love Theatre (Mirage Casino) – Las Vegas, NV
Mac-Hadyn Theatre – Chatham, NY
Marian Performing Arts Center – Santa Maria, CA
Marriot Theatre – Lincolnshire, IL
Mary Moody Northern Theatre (St. Edwards University) – Austin, TX
The New Theatre (Oregon Shakespeare Festival) – Ashland, OR
North Shore Music Theatre – Beverly, MA
NYCB Theatre at Westbury (Westbury Music Fair) – Westbury, NY
Rarig Center Theatre (University of Minnesota) – Minneapolis, MN
Reilly Theatre (Swine Palace Productions, LSU) – Baton Rouge, LA
Richmond Hill Players – Geneseo, IL
Riverside Community Players – Riverside, CA
Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre Center (Old Globe Theatre) – San Diego, CA
South Shore Music Circus – Cohasset, MA
Space Theatre (Denver Center for the Performing Arts) – Denver, CO
Theatre in the Round – Minneapolis, MN
Theatre in the Round (Seton Hall University) – South Orange, NJ
The Ula Love Doughty Carousel Theatre (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) – Knoxville, TN
Wagon Wheel Theatre – Warsaw, IN
Wells Fargo Pavilion (California Musical Theatre’s Music Circus) – Sacramento, CA
Whisenhunt Stage (ZACH Theatre) – Austin, TX
Wright-Curtis Theatre (Kent State University) – Kent, OH

*This list is representative. It includes theatres with adjustable seating that can be configured to theatre-in-the-round, as well as main stage theatres at universities. Black box theatres are not included.*