

Modulation as a Dramatic Agent in Frank Loesser's Broadway Songs

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We often think of direct stepwise modulation as a crude way to convey a sense of intensification. Certainly that is how many popular composers have exploited the device, but this article examines its various guises in four of Frank Loesser's theatrical songs—"Adelaide's Lament," "Luck be a Lady," "How to Succeed," and "My Time of Day"—demonstrating how the composer utilizes such modulations to serve very different rhetorical functions, portraying situational anxiety, gravity, or whimsy. The article suggests that the ways in which we structurally understand (and analyze) direct modulation can be linked to its narrative aim. Two analytical models will be introduced: one represents a coloristic or purely dramatic tonal ascent, while the other represents a more profound sense of melodic ascent that reassigns scale-degree function to a different pitch class. The four analytical vignettes grow in length and complexity over the course of this article, concluding with a large-scale reading of the dramatic and tonal paths traversed in "My Time of Day" from *Guys and Dolls*.

Keywords: Frank Loesser, *Guys and Dolls*, Broadway, direct modulation

ABRUPT KEY CHANGES ARE PART AND PARCEL of the Broadway repertoire, and their dramatic effects range from modest to exciting. Particularly in Frank Loesser's hands, the structural role of direct modulation often seems intrinsically related to its rhetorical function. I hope to demonstrate that the manner in which we analytically represent such modulations can reflect their dramatic character accordingly. This article both discusses the effect that such modulations play on tonal and dramatic continuity and includes analytical readings of four theatrical songs by Frank Loesser.

Though many of the analytical observations herein could apply to works by a range of Broadway composers, there are

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several reasons to focus on Loesser (1910–1969). His shows are especially noted for their tight integration of music and lyrics, and even stock gestures rarely seem to be applied gratuitously. Loesser focused heavily on text, perhaps because, like Stephen Sondheim, his early successes were as a lyricist and also because, like Cole Porter, he wrote both the music and lyrics to all of his mature songs. Moreover, Loesser's Broadway songs often forward their respective plots rather than suspend them, an attribute that lends itself well to a study of the relationship of text (in the broadest sense) and musical structure. Though direct modulation might well seem to be a bit of a facile subject of inquiry, I believe—and I hope to demonstrate—that in many cases such an impression is deceptive.¹

¹ Adam Ricci (2000) has produced a convincing analytical study of its non-trivial use in rock music, specifically the group Chicago.

Not all direct modulations are dramatic, however. To provide greater context, I will begin by briefly discussing utilitarian modulations and move toward increasingly dramatic ones. Duets and dance numbers, in particular, regularly modulate either to accommodate two different voice ranges or for the simple sake of variety. Modulations often signal choreographic changes in dance numbers, and the musical texture or accompanimental pattern often shifts with the key. In duets, modulations are most common when the two singers perform the same tune consecutively, rather than simultaneously or antiphonally.

Both “consecutive duets” in *Guys and Dolls* (1950) follow this pattern. In Act I, the missionary Sarah Brown begins “I’ll Know” in A major.² Sky Masterson responds by singing the same tune (with rather different lyrics and slightly different accompaniment) a fourth lower in E major. The song never returns to its tonal antecedent, but ends definitively in E major.³ Likewise, their big love duet, “I’ve Never Been in Love Before” (from the end of Act I) commences with Sky singing in B \flat major and ends with Sarah a third (tenth)

higher in D major. In both cases, the initiating singer returns only during the last phrase to sing in counterpoint to his or her mate.⁴

In neither “I’ll Know” nor “I’ve Never Been in Love Before” do the initial and concluding tonalities seem organically connected. When classical songs and instrumental works begin and end in different keys, analysts will generally argue for one of two modes of understanding the structural relationship between those key areas. If, for example, rather than looking at “I’ll Know,” we were examining an art song that began in A major and ended in E major, we might either claim that the work concluded with a well-tonicized half cadence or else that the initial section was a prolonged subdominant that eventually made its way to the *true* home key of E major.⁵ The first view of discontinuous tonality (where the initial key is primary) has been analytically modeled by Deborah Stein’s “directional tonality” and the latter by Heinrich Schenker’s “auxiliary

2 For readers who are unacquainted with *Guys and Dolls*: Rogue gambler Sky Masterson has bet one thousand dollars that he can quickly woo any woman, having her accompany him on a forthcoming excursion to Havana. His betting partner, Nathan Detroit, named a pretty, but prim, local missionary (Sarah Brown) who spends her time with a Salvation Army-type band in a seemingly futile attempt to convert such rogues as Sky and Nathan. The story, by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows, is loosely based upon Damon Runyon’s characters and short fiction.

3 All musical references are to the original published vocal scores (which were directly prepared by Loesser), not to the sheet music or books of “musical selections” that were released after the show opened. Sheet music versions are often abridged and/or simplified, regularly removing modulations and extra verses, while imposing recomposed introductions and endings. Moreover, as with most musical theater composers, Loesser did not orchestrate his own songs (though he sometimes included orchestral annotations in his manuscripts), so the widely available vocal scores generally provide the most reliable source material.

4 By contrast, “Sue Me,” the famous duet between Nathan Detroit and Miss Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls*, Act II remains in one key throughout. It might be called an “antiphonal duet”: the characters alternate singing, with one interrupting the other, and both singing essentially different melodies. A utilitarian modulatory scheme would be difficult under such circumstances. However, the fight song “Grand Old Ivy,” from Act I of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, is sung by both characters simultaneously (with relatively few antiphonal moments). The two singers project a single persona during that number, so when they modulate together it seems more like a solo-song modulation of the sort described later in this article. Most of the duets in *The Most Happy Fella* feature simultaneous rather than consecutive entrances, and (perhaps consequently) most remain in a single key.

5 One might find exceptions in the operatic literature, particularly in nineteenth century Italian opera, however modulations in such cases rarely occur in the same sort of context (i.e., they do not arrive with a second hearing of a refrain, but rather are triggered by different thematic material). Powers (1987) discusses some scene types in *ottocento* opera, including various key schemes. Many thanks to an anonymous reader for suggesting this potential connection to earlier dramatic vocal music.

cadence.”⁶ In both cases, an overarching sense of organicism and monotonicity leads us to posit an asymmetrical, and ultimately hierarchical, relationship between the opening and closing keys.⁷

Both Stein's and Schenker's models square with the aesthetics of much common practice music. But in “I'll Know” and “I've Never Been in Love Before,” the modulations apparently play a rather mundane role: simply to allow both singers to perform in a comfortable range.⁸ And so it would seem disingenuous to apply either the directional tonality or auxiliary cadence model to such situations.⁹ When both songs end, they sound conclusive; when the first sections of both songs end (in their initial keys), they also sound conclusive. The second key area substitutes for, rather than dramatically departs from, the first. This might explain why modulation in most consecutive duets and dance numbers hardly seems dramatic. Indeed, in the 1955 cinematic version of *Guys and Dolls*, Sarah

Brown (played by Jean Simmons) begins “I'll Know” in E flat major and Sky Masterson (played by Marlon Brando) follows in C major. Not only are these keys different from the original score, but they are related by minor third, not perfect fourth. Even this seemingly significant tonal alteration does not appreciably change the song.

Such utilitarian modulations were common in duets and dance numbers by Loesser's contemporaries as well (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Loewe, and Adler and Ross) and motion from one key to the next was almost always direct: i.e., modulations were not generally prepared by a common diatonic chord and smoothly executed, but rather occurred at the beginning of a phrase, sometimes anticipated only by a dominant seventh chord of the new key, if that. Direct modulations tend to be aurally apparent, even to casual listeners, and yet these modulations by third, fourth, or larger intervals rarely carry any dramatic weight. We hear the modulation, we just do not generally sense that it transmits any extramusical meaning, and neither do we particularly care that the original key will not likely return.

Direct *stepwise* modulation generally occurs in rather different circumstances, and it reflects a wholly different scenario. Loesser's songs (and, for that matter, songs by Rodgers and Hammerstein or Adler and Ross, among others) that modulate by step tend to be solo numbers and the modulation, which usually occurs just before the repeat of a refrain, often carries some dramatic significance. At very least, songs that modulate up by step (either half or whole) tend to convey a sense of intensification. Loesser often motivically and textually foreshadowed his intensifying modulations, resulting in more interesting and elaborate musical junctures than the wanton up-a-step modulations that have at times met with critical derision.¹⁰

- 6 Regarding directional tonality, see Stein 1995 and Stein and Spillman 1996. Schenker (1979) most famously described the auxiliary cadence model (89); Krebs (1981), Burstein (1988 and 2005), and Anson-Cartwright (2001) offer particularly cogent recent explorations of the auxiliary cadence and its applicability.
- 7 Some might argue that it is no more appropriate to compare nineteenth-century art song with duets like “I'll Know” than it would be to compare art song to nineteenth-century opera. To a certain extent, that is true, but *Guys and Dolls* is a numbers musical in which songs (with only a single exception) do not run into one another, but are separated with unsung prose. Broadway songs that gained popularity were often performed and recorded individually, quite apart from their dramatic context.
- 8 Similarly, in “My Darling, My Darling,” a love duet between the characters Jack and Kitty from Loesser's *Where's Charley* (1948), he begins in B \flat major, she then enters (singing the same tune) in D \flat major. When they finally sing together at the end, however, they perform in C major—a musical compromise, of sorts.
- 9 Robert Bailey's double tonic complex (Bailey 1985) is a model that seems even more foreign to Loesser's music. While two keys in a show tune might be thought of as equal in some sense, there is generally no organic connection between the two and also no sense of tonal fluxuation (in the sense of the tonal relationships often found in Wagner and other chromatic music).

- 10 Indeed, Patrick McCreless referred to “Barry Manilow' tonality” and the notion that such modulations are “immediate, automatic, and mechanical” (1996, 106). Certainly, those qualities are not all present in the songs discussed herein, particularly “How to Succeed” and “My Time of Day.”

“Adelaide’s Lament,” from *Guys and Dolls*, provides a relatively straightforward example of this sort of modulation. In the comedic but heartfelt song, Miss Adelaide (the musical’s only main character without a last name) bemoans Nathan Detroit’s avoidance of commitment. Adelaide is a burlesque singer in small nightclub and the scene preceding her lament takes place in her dressing room, just after her final (diegetic) performance of the night—the upbeat “Bushel and a Peck.” A backstage conversation between Adelaide and Nathan reveals that the couple has been engaged for fourteen years and that many years ago Adelaide informed her mother in Rhode Island that she and Nathan were already married and had produced five children (this was news to Nathan). Nathan, who earns his living by staging the “oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York,” has continually promised Adelaide both that they will soon get married and that he will give up gambling. It has become obvious to Adelaide that he plans to make good on neither promise. She tries to pressure Nathan by telling him about her doctor’s conjecture that marital anxieties may have triggered her persistent cold-like symptoms.

Disconcerted by Adelaide’s talk of commitment, Nathan quickly leaves her dressing room after condescendingly assuring her: “You’ll feel better tomorrow; come on, cheer up, honey. Let’s see that old smile. That’s my happy girl. See you tomorrow” (Swerling, Burrows, and Loesser 1951, 26). “Adelaide’s Lament” begins as Adelaide picks a big psychology book and reads:

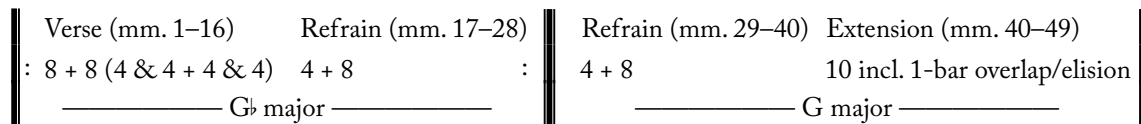
It says here
[singing]
The average unmarried female, basically insecure
Due to some long frustration may react
With psychosomatic symptoms, difficult to endure
Affecting the upper respiratory tract. [*Looks up from book.*]
In other words, just from waiting around for that plain little
band of gold
A person . . . can develop a cold.

In each verse, Adelaide sings of some ailment that can be psychosomatically induced by a boyfriend who avoids

marriage.¹¹ The song repeats the verse and refrain once before featuring a third and final rendition of the refrain, transposed up a half step (from G \flat to G). A diagram of the form and tonal regions appears in Example 1. The fleeting transition from G \flat to G, shown in Example 2, consists of a repeated dominant of G, set, burlesque-style, with a repeated triplet gesture.

Aside from some chromatic double neighbors that mark (and motivically connect) both the verse and the refrain, there is little that musically anticipates this song’s modulation from G \flat to G. Indeed, a pre-publication draft of the song shows that it initially remained in G \flat throughout.¹² Without the dramatic modulation, the song’s lyrics convey the same meaning, but they lose some intensity and Loesser’s depiction of Adelaide’s emotional state seems less vivid. This sort of direct upward modulation produces a surge of dramatic power, rather like increasing amplitude and/or adding performing forces.¹³ In this case, the modulation also conveys Adelaide’s increased anxiety and, given her relatively low social status, it imbues the song with a certain unpolished authenticity. It also musically paints Loesser’s lyrics which (at that point) sound like an extemporized continuation: “And furthermore, just from stalling and stalling

- 11 Both phrases in the first refrain cadence with the warning “a person can develop a cold.” Likewise, the end of the second refrain cautions “a person can develop a cough,” and the feared illness in the final refrain and coda is “la grippe” (influenza). In many regards, the lyric here resembles “The Physician” (1933), Cole Porter’s whimsical song of medicine and avoided romance.
- 12 Many thanks to Joseph Weiss at Frank Loesser Enterprises for calling this to my attention. The draft was from a hand-copied conductor’s score. It isn’t clear whether the modulation was added before or after the musical opened on Broadway. That score might have been used during *Guys and Dolls*’ trail run in Philadelphia.
- 13 This phenomenon has also been called the “pump-up modulation,” David Huron discusses its psychological effect in his recent book, *Sweet Anticipation* (2006, 285).



EXAMPLE I. *Form diagram of “Adelaide’s Lament” (sections, phrase structure, tonality)*

and stalling the wedding trip, A person . . . can develop La grippe.” The lyrics and well-placed modulation effectively extend a short list of symptoms into something of a litany.

Like the duets mentioned earlier, the ascending half-step modulation in “Adelaide’s Lament” does nothing to challenge our sense of tonal unity. The G \flat and G major tonics play the same role: neither is hierarchically central, and neither anticipates or is anticipated by the other. When we abruptly move to G major, it simply substitutes for G \flat . Accordingly, the melodic head tone, $\hat{3}$, is dually interpreted as B \flat or B \natural , with the latter merely serving as a different “shade” of the former. Again, this does not behave like a large-scale auxiliary cadence both because the modulation from G \flat to G fulfills no implicit tonal goal and, more

broadly, because coloristic/utilitarian modulations carry no tonal force.

Example 3 includes a somewhat unconventional-looking foreground reading of the refrain from “Adelaide’s Lament.” To convey the intensification of scale degree analytically, I precede the raised scale degree by a small upward arrow (e.g., $\hat{3}$ versus $\uparrow\hat{3}$). Functionally, they are both $\hat{3}$, but one is a bit higher. This differs considerably from the phenomenon of mode mixture, whereby two versions of a scale degree (often $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{6}$) are equated. Mode mixture provides an analytical acknowledgement that the major and minor forms of most chords (those that carry no dominant function) serve a functionally similar, if dramatically contrasting, role in a progression. Comparatively, $\hat{3}$ and $\uparrow\hat{3}$ enjoy a far less dichotomous

The musical score shows three measures of music. Measure 27 is in G \flat major (V \flat_4). Measure 28 is in G \flat major (I). Measure 29 is in G major (I). The vocal line has lyrics: "per - son _____ can de - vel - op a cough" in measure 27, "And" in measure 28, and "fur - ther - more_ just from stall - ing and stall - ing and" in measure 29. The piano accompaniment features triplets in measures 27 and 28, and block chords in measure 29.

EXAMPLE 2. *Transition from G \flat major to G major in “Adelaide’s Lament” (measures 27–29). “Adelaide’s Lament” from Guys and Dolls by Frank Loesser © 1950 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.*

Refrain

In other words,
just from worrying whether wedding is on or off person can develop cough

you can spray strepto - cocci lurk give ... shot just won't work tired fish-eyed hotel clerk person can develop cold. And furthermore ...

I 6 ii⁶ ø⁷ V⁴ V⁷ $\frac{9}{3}$ I^{add6}

I IV iv⁷ I^{add6} [b7] IV⁵⁻⁶ V⁴ $\frac{9}{3}$ —10 I^{add6} [V] I

EXAMPLE 3. Foreground sketch of the second refrain and bridge from “Adelaide’s Lament” from *Guys and Dolls*

relationship than, for example, $\hat{3}$ versus $\flat\hat{3}$. Also, $\hat{3}$ and $\uparrow\hat{3}$ are generally used in identical musical contexts.

The degree to which stepwise modulations reflect narrative events varies, and the examples herein progressively move toward more dramatic and musically complex uses of this device. Like “Adelaide’s Lament,” “Luck be a Lady” features intensifying ascending half-step modulation, but in this

musical and dramatic context the gesture carries a substantially different set of associations. Sky Masterson needs to prove himself to the missionary Sarah Brown, and he has promised to populate her mission hall with sinners for a midnight revival meeting. For Sarah, the future of her mission hangs in the balance; for Sky, his honor and his chances for love are at stake. In desperation, Sky bets each of the gamblers one thousand dollars against “their souls” on a single roll of the dice. He sings “Luck be a Lady” immediately before rolling the dice, and the song highlights the big craps

The musical score for the refrain of "Luck be a Lady" is presented in two staves: treble and bass clef. The key signature is D-flat major (two flats). The score is divided into four sections: A1 (measures 27-44), A2 (measures 45-62), B (measures 63-78), and A3 (measures 79-86). Above the treble staff, the section labels A1, A2, B, and A3 are placed. Measure numbers 27, 45, 63, and 79 are indicated. Above the first notes of each section, there are harmonic symbols: a 5 with a hat over it, a 5 with a hat and a sharp sign, a 5 with a hat and a double sharp sign, and a 6 with a hat and a sharp sign followed by a 5 with a hat. Below the bass staff, the harmonic structure is indicated: D-flat major (I), D major (I), D major (I), and a sequence of chords: V7/V (D7), V (D), and I (!) (D-flat major). The score shows chromatic voice leading between sections, with dashed lines indicating the path of individual notes.

EXAMPLE 4. *Middleground voice leading and harmonies in "Luck be a Lady" (refrain). "Luck be a Lady" from Guys and Dolls by Frank Loesser © 1950 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.*

game held in a New York City gutter (a beautiful art deco gutter in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's 1955 cinematic rendition).

Rolling the dice is a climactic moment in the story, and "Luck be a Lady" plays an almost exclusively intensifying role. It does not exactly further the plot, but builds tension while delaying the dramatic climax.¹⁴ The analytical sketch in Example 4 highlights some of the refrain's prominent tonal events while depicting the relatively static voice leading throughout its **A** sections. Like many popular songs, the refrain of "Luck be a Lady" follows an **AABA** design, but Loesser added a tonal twist. It begins in D \flat major, then modulates to D major at the second chorus, and further modulates to E \flat major at the bridge (**B** section), before returning to D \flat for the concluding chorus.

Foreshadowing these modulations are the harmonic oscillations that permeate each refrain. Example 5 gives the opening refrain measures of "Luck be a Lady," but the same half-step harmonic swaying persists throughout the refrain's

A sections.¹⁵ Those D \flat and D harmonies (which respectively carry tonic and dominant functions) at the outset prepare us for the abrupt modulation to D at the second chorus, and the subsequent D and E \flat oscillations prepare us for the rather less abrupt modulation to E \flat at the bridge.¹⁶

Arguably, the half-step modulations are further anticipated by some surface chromaticism at the beginning of the introductory verse. Example 6 shows the melody in measures 1–17. From the outset, the melodic contour and metrical accents strongly emphasize the chromatic semitone motion: "They *call* you 'Lady Luck.' But *there* is room for doubt. At *times* you *have* a very un-lady-like way of running out." The parallels between the melodic inflections at the italicized syllables, the refrain's surface harmonic oscillations, and the large-scale ascending half-step tonal motion seem particularly clear.

15 In this regard, the refrain of "Luck be a Lady" resembles much of "Fiddler on the Roof," the title number from the musical by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick.

16 D \flat is heard to function as the dominant of D \flat because it shares the distinctive tritone of D \flat 's diatonic dominant seventh chord. Exchanging V \flat for a dominant seventh chord a tritone away is commonly known among jazz musicians as "tritone substitution."

14 McMillin (2006) similarly describes the dramatic role of "Luck be a Lady" as follows: "Remove the number and Sky will still win his bet. The plot will be intact, but the scene will lose its power, because the dramatic interest is in the elaboration that the song-and-dance number gives to the gamblers' concern for 'Lady Luck'" (44).

27

Luck be a la - dy to - night.____

pp

EXAMPLE 5. *Harmonic oscillation in “Luck be a Lady,” measures 27–30. “Luck be a Lady” from Guys and Dolls by Frank Loesser © 1950 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.*

Like “Adelaide’s Lament,” each modulation in “Luck be a Lady” merely intensifies; these gestures seem coloristic rather than like points of embarkation on some chromatic tonal journey. One could, of course, understand the initial modulation as a large-scale motion from tonic to Neapolitan and, perhaps more persuasively, as a melodic motion from a clearly prolonged $\mathfrak{5}$ to $\flat 6$. Though this sort of reading would capture some sense of the local ascent that I think we do

feel, the primary melodic tone in the second chorus receives exactly the same treatment as $\mathfrak{5}$ in the first chorus. So, again, the motion from $\mathfrak{5}$ to $\uparrow\mathfrak{5}$ to $\uparrow\uparrow\mathfrak{5}$ seems like the more musically plausible, if slightly unwieldy, description.

The least conspicuous of the direct modulations comes at the transition to the bridge (**B** section). Like the first ascending stepwise modulation, the progression is abrupt: a tonic chord in the first key is followed by the dominant seventh

mm. 1-9: They call you “La - dy Luck.” But there is room for doubt. At
mm. 9-17: You’re on this date with me. The pick - ings have been lush. And

(mm. 9-10)

times you have a ve - ry un - la - dy - like way of run - ning out.____ You’re on ...
yet be - fore this eve - ning is o - ver you might give me the brush.____

EXAMPLE 6. *Introductory verse of “Luck be a Lady,” measures 1–9 (=10–17). “Luck be a Lady” from Guys and Dolls by Frank Loesser © 1950 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.*

chord in the next key, and that subsequently resolves at the first measure of the next section.¹⁷ But here, the (melodic) tonic note (D) upon which the second **A** section comes to rest is reinterpreted as the leading tone of E \flat as the **B** section begins. Because the bridge is the only section that does not doggedly sit on $\mathfrak{5}$, it provides the sole opportunity for a more flowing modulatory transition.

Unlike the relatively smooth approach to the bridge, the return from E \flat to D \flat at the **A** section's reprise unquestionably forms the song's most jarring modulation. Though the key relations (E \flat to D \flat) are tonally closest (lying only two fifths apart), the sudden drop down a step, feels like the bottom has fallen out of our musical vessel. There's a bit of a musical paradox in this modulation: the two ascending half step modulations (from D \flat to D and from D to E \flat) seem emphatic, not structural, and neither is surprising. The harsh effect in moving from E \flat to D \flat may be at least partially attributable to the fact that descending stepwise modulations are truly extraordinary in this genre, but in this case the descent also feels like a grand undoing of the song's overall ascending motion. Moreover, it serves as a wonderful tonal analog to Loesser's lyrics. Throughout the first three refrain sections (**AAB**), the LUCK \rightarrow LADY metaphor becomes more thoroughly structured as other facets of ladylike behavior are explicitly mapped onto the domain of luck. In this sense, these lyrics construct a well-grounded example of what Lakoff and Johnson call an ontological metaphor, a broad category that includes personification metaphors such as LUCK \rightarrow LADY (2003, 25–34).¹⁸ Unlike most metaphors that structure our common turns of phrase, these lyrics obviously deconstruct the familiar phrase “lady luck,” explicitly drawing attention

A1 (D \flat major)	Luck be a lady tonight Luck be a lady tonight Luck, if you've ever been a lady to begin with, Luck be a lady tonight.
A2 (D major)	Luck let a gentleman see How nice a dame you can be. I know the way you've treated other guys you've been with, Luck be a lady with me!
B (E \flat major)	A lady doesn't leave her escort It isn't fair, it isn't nice. A lady doesn't wander all over the room And blow on some other guy's dice.
A3 (D \flat major)	So let's keep the party polite. Never get out of my sight Stick with me, baby, I'm the fellow you came in with. Luck be a lady — Luck be a lady — Luck be a lady tonight.

EXAMPLE 7. “*Luck be a Lady*,” lyrics from first full refrain (measures 27–104). “*Luck be a Lady*” from *Guys and Dolls* by Frank Loesser © 1950 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.

to its metaphorical function, and listing an assortment of ladylike behavior that could also describe attributes of luck.¹⁹

Example 7 reproduces the lyrics to the first refrain. The first **A** section (**A1**) simply introduces the metaphorical mapping (LUCK \rightarrow LADY). **A2** develops the metaphor, with

17 Some might liberally consider this a pivot chord modulation because the new dominant could also be construed as an unrequited German augmented sixth chord in the initial key.

18 The metaphorical mapping of LUCK \rightarrow LADY entails a more foundational understanding of luck as an entity, one that shares many characteristics with ladies. Etymologically, the phrase “lady luck” probably stems from the mythological representation of Fortuna as a woman.

19 One might read Loesser's lyrics as creating a blended space (like those developed in the conceptual integration networks of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner) in which the good fortune and ladylike behavior are explicitly cross-mapped. This form of linguistic analysis is receiving increased play in recent music-theoretic literature (cf. Cook 2001, Zbikowski 2002, and Chattah 2006). In this case, however, my sense is

references to ladylike kindness and even unladylike promiscuity. The bridge moves even farther, asking that luck be like a well-mannered lady, one who loyally avoids flirting with others. As the metaphor becomes more deeply structured, the tonal edifice escalates. By the bridge, Sky Masterson is no longer mentioning the metaphor's target domain (luck) but is only elaborating its source—those ladylike attributes that correspond with good fortune. The lyrics at this point are fully metaphorical and the tonal foundation has reached its height, having modulated twice by ascending semitone. Only at the point of thematic and tonal return (**A3**), does Sky return to “reality,” explicitly bringing the dramatic focus back to his impending dice roll. By extension, the startling drop back to our initial key starkly reminds us that those dramatic ascending half-step modulations truly were fleeting surface phenomena.

* * *

Ascending stepwise modulation conveys different symbolic meaning in “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying,” from the 1961 show of the same name. Pitch height can be understood as depicting building height, which in turn corresponds to positional status (that old “corporate ladder”). At the musical's beginning, the protagonist, J. Pierrepont Finch, works as a lowly window washer at a big firm. On his way to work, he picks up the musical's title Dale Carnegie-styled self-help book at a newsstand and this song primarily sets the putative book's table of contents, as read by Finch.²⁰ The result is a sort of *gradus ad* corporate climbing and, at least in the cinematic portrayal, Finch (played by Robert Morse both on Broadway and on screen) begins the number

that “Luck be a Lady” is far more of a commentary on Sky Masterson's immediate need for luck than on how women behave. Therefore, the simpler unidirectional metaphorical analysis seems sufficient.

20 I called it a “putative book,” yet Loesser's musical was very loosely based on an actual book called *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, a Dale Carnegie lampoon by Shepherd Mead (1952). The book that

just after literally descending on the building's exterior scaffolding. As the musical's first song, immediately following the overture, it effectively frames the plot. In that sense, it serves the same role (if in a modern context) as “Comedy Tonight” from Stephen Sondheim's nearly contemporaneous *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962).²¹

Like “Luck be a Lady,” “How to Succeed” features two ascending stepwise modulations, and its melody also sits on 5 for long periods of time. Formally, however, it is a far simpler tune. “How to Succeed” divides into two similar sections (roughly **A A'**), with the latter interrupted by some dialogue (at measure 39). The first section essentially functions as an antecedent structure, beginning in F major and ending with a half cadence on V of ii (measure 23). After a brief transition, the second section (**A'**) begins in G major (measure 31) and, like a transposed version of **A**, it also ends with a half cadence on (the new) V of ii (measures 49–51), thus failing to provide any sort of true consequent structure. Because of these section-ending half cadences, the modulations from F to G, and the would-be modulation from G to A come across as less sudden than those stepwise modulations in “Adelaide's Lament” and “Luck be a Lady.”²² Eager readers can glance ahead to Example 11 to see a middleground sketch that synthesizes the song's form and tonal/contrapuntal goals.

The modulation from F to G that concludes the **A** section is the culmination of a tonal force that was previously

Finch purchases and follows in the musical, however, is clearly not meant to be a parody; rather the entire musical is a parody. Thus, the book in the musical's diegesis is not the one that truly exists, although there are overlaps between the two.

21 Sondheim's “Comedy Tonight” features even more extensive use of dramatic stepwise modulation. Like “How to Succeed,” “Comedy Tonight” is structured in a series of parallel refrains, but is far lengthier. It begins in G major, the second refrain is in A \flat major, the third refrain is in A major, and the fourth is in B \flat major. It then restarts in G major and eventually concludes in A \flat major.

22 Both section-ending half cadences sound strangely conclusive, perhaps because they each fulfill long-standing melodic goals.

3 **A** FINCH:
 How to ap - ply for a job... How to ad - vance from the mail room...

7
 How to sit down at a desk... How to dic - tate mem - o - ran - dums...

EXAMPLE 8. "How to Succeed," measures 3–10. "How to Succeed" from *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* by Frank Loesser © 1961 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.

(and unsuccessfully) set in motion. The song opens with an extended tonic harmony and, as mentioned, the rather static melody lingers on $\bar{5}$. Example 8 provides the first eight measures, omitting a two-measure instrumental introduction. In measures 6–7, G minor (ii) is tonicized, but only two measures later we are jerked right back down to F major, without the grace of an interceding dominant harmony. Textually, there are some obvious associations. At "how to apply for a job," Finch is grounded; at "how to advance from the mail room," he moves up a step; and at "how to sit down at a desk," he has gone one step too far. Overreaching too quickly is something that is penalized at various points in the musical. The musical overreaching is rebuffed, but a later attempt at climbing to G succeeds.

In measures 9–13, Finch overreaches even farther. "How to dictate memorandums" moves toward a tonicization of the mediant (A minor), and with the next line, "how to develop executive style; how to commute in a three-button suit with that weary executive style," the rapid underlying pulse comes to halt. Finch has not only tonally overreached (and, in so doing, anticipated his ultimate ascent to the key of A), but he has entered a sort of dream space, signified both by the absence of the constant grounding pulse and the metrical cessation. Example 9 provides the score. With this uncharacteristic recitative, the harmonies move non-functionally from iii to V^7 of ii to a decorative major I^7 chord. That "dream" ends abruptly at measure 18, when Finch comes crashing back to reality (F major) with the return of the song's driving pulse.

B

11 **Recitativo**

How to de-vel-op ex-ec-u-tive style... How to com-mute in a three-but-ton suit...

Str., *fp*
Hp.

16 **C** **A tempo**

With that wea-ry ex-ec-u-tive smile.

Str., Gtr., Drums

EXAMPLE 9. “How to Succeed,” measures 11–18. “How to Succeed” from *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* by Frank Loesser © 1961 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.

This greatly expanded phrase finally concludes with a half cadence in G (or V of ii in F major) at the title lyric “how to, how to succeed” (measures 21–23).

Following an orchestral transition, the music seems to restart at measure 31—the beginning of **A'**. The initial section's inconclusive ending followed by a musical restart comes across as an interrupted structure in every way except for the conventional return to our initial key. Even so, **A** concluded with a half cadence in G, and we subsequently begin **A'** in G major. At this point, the initial tonality (F major) has been eradicated, and there is no residual expectation that we will return to it.

Because of the tonal continuity from the end of **A** (where the modulation is triggered) to the beginning of **A'** (where it is ossified), the modulation does not merely feel coloristic or emphatic in the same sense as those in “Adelaide’s Lament” and “Luck be a Lady.” Rather, it sounds as though we have melodically moved from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{6}$, and that $\hat{6}$ has subsequently been reinterpreted as another form of $\hat{5}$. Rather than $\uparrow\hat{5}$, I use the symbol $\hat{5}^+$ to describe this type of modulatory scale-degree shift. Both $\uparrow\hat{5}$ and $\hat{5}^+$ connote the sense that we have maintained $\hat{5}$ without truly modulating. The difference is that the motion from $\hat{5}$ to $\uparrow\hat{5}$ seems like a purely coloristic change (e.g., **A1** compared to **A2** in “Luck be a Lady”), whereas the

E

31 FINCH

How to ob - serve per - son - nel ... How to se - lect whom to lunch with ...

35

How to a - void pet - ty friends ... How to be - gin mak - ing con - tacts ... How to ...

[Stop]

EXAMPLE 10. "How to Succeed," measures 31–39. "How to Succeed" from *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* by Frank Loesser © 1961 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.

motion from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{5}^+$ sounds like a true melodic ascent. This might be a rather fine distinction in some cases, but generally when the entire texture simply shifts up a whole or half step, I hear the \uparrow kind of modulation; when there is more of a transition, and especially when the salient melodic scale degree moves up before the rest of the texture moves up, I hear the $+$ sort of modulation.

The **A'** section of "How to Succeed," the beginning of which is provided in Example 10, plays out much like the initial section. At "how to select whom to lunch with; how to avoid petty friends" (measures 33–36), we ascend from G

major to A minor (I to tonicized ii); At "how to begin making contacts" (measures 37–38) we tonicize iii (B minor), but as it appears that we are continually heading upward, the music is literally interrupted for some prose. In the cinematic version, this is represented as another dream sequence, but is executed rather differently. Everyone in the office but Finch freezes as he looks around and determines that he has indeed found a large and impersonal enough company that the book's manipulative techniques should work. When the music abruptly continues, the song restarts in G major and quickly closes by moving to another half cadence on V of ii. Implicitly, we end

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the song "How to Succeed." Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The first system is in F major and contains measures 9-23. The second system is in G major and contains measures 31-40. The lyrics are: "How to ... advance from the mail-room", "How to ... dictate memorandums ... Develop executive style ... smile", "This book suc-ceed is all that I need", "How to ... select whom to lunch with", "How to ... begin making contacts ...", and "This book suc-ceed is all that I need". Chord diagrams are provided below the bass line, and scale degrees are indicated above the vocal line.

System 1 (F Major):

- Measures 9-14: $\hat{5}$ (F)
- Measures 14-18: $\hat{5}$ (F)
- Measures 18-23: $\hat{5}$ (F) and $\hat{6}$ (G) (= G: $\hat{5}$ = F: $\hat{5}^+$)

System 2 (G Major):

- Measures 31-37: $\hat{5}$ (G)
- Measures 37-40: $\hat{5}$ (G) and $\hat{6}$ (A) (= A: $\hat{5}$ = F: $\hat{5}^+$)

EXAMPLE II. "How to Succeed," middleground sketch

in A Major, the expected key of the prospective next section. Both half cadences set the word "succeed," which is also the word on which the stepwise ascents occur.

Melodically, the song is relatively static, lingering on $\hat{5}$ of the initial key, then moving up to $\hat{5}$ in the second key and then up to $\hat{5}$ in the third key. Though the melody is always, in some sense, sitting on $\hat{5}$ (as was also the case in "Luck be a Lady"), there is nevertheless a clear overall melodic ascent from C to D to E. In other words, these stepwise modulations convey a real sense of motion, not merely dramatic intensification. At its core (the background or deep middleground level), this song moves sequentially, like a grand (if strange)

linear intervallic pattern. Examples 11 and 12, the middle-ground and background sketches, summarize the long-range tonal and melodic motion. Yet I hope they will not be read as unsuccessful attempts to conform to Schenkerian paradigms. Even without the upward modulations, this song defies the application of any standard *Urlinie* model. Although these sketches suggest that tonal closure is either not attained or simply differently attained, they do not signal a true departure from common-practice tonality.

The theoretical repercussions of such an analysis might be somewhat disquieting. In this case, I hear linear motion, but I never sense that a different scale degree is being prolonged.

EXAMPLE 12. "How to Succeed," background sketch

That suggests detaching the concepts of pitch class and scale degree. In various modes of tonal analysis (including, of course, Schenkerian analysis), it is common to equate chromatic inflections of the same scale degree. Where stepwise modulation is concerned, I think we need to reach farther and draw equivalences among even diatonically differentiated pitch classes. Consider that an auxiliary cadential model for this song would suggest retrospectively hearing a long-range $\sharp 3 - 4 - 5$ melodic line in A major. On the other hand, the directional tonality model (in which the starting key is central) might lead us toward a $5 - 6 - 7$ line in F major. If, as I expect, neither of these readings seems to convey this particular musical experience, then tonal consistency might not be necessary to produce a sense of tonal unity, at least in this musical genre. A corollary to this observation is that motives or melodies that are strongly associated with particular scale degrees might be able to produce (or at least mimic) a sense of tonal unity without staying in, or even starting and ending in, the same key.²³

Of course, not all stepwise modulations are direct and not all direct and/or stepwise modulations resemble the types shown previously. The subject of our final analytical vignette is a song with a relatively frayed tonal and motivic fabric and its ascending modulation is less direct and considerably more sublime than those featured earlier.

Both musically and dramatically, "My Time of Day" is one of Frank Loesser's most complex and compelling songs. It comes at a pivotal point in *Gypsy and Dolls*: the end of Act 1. Sky Masterson and Sarah Brown have just returned to New York from their night-long excursion to Havana. It is very early in the morning, just before dawn, and it has become clear that the relationship between them has shifted from adversarial to loving. But this is less of a love song than a pre-love song. Over the course of "My Time of Day," Sky, the hardened gambler, exposes his frailties. It immediately precedes and serves as something of a recitative to their big love duet, "I've Never Been in Love Before." The complete score to "My Time of Day" appears as Example 13.

Arguably, the most stable moment of "My Time of Day" is the very first measure after the instrumental introduction (measure 8). This song begins in F major and, over the course of its brief 29 measures (including the seven-measure introduction), either tonicizes or modulates to G major, G minor, B \flat major, and A \flat major before concluding in G major. There are no strong cadential points in any of these tonal regions, including the opening and closing key areas. It ends with a five-measure segue that moves from G major to B \flat major, the opening key of "I've Never Been in Love Before."

None of the various modulations and tonicizations in this song performs a clear utilitarian function. "My Time of Day" is Sky Masterson's confession: it is where he sheds his cool exterior, revealing his frailties and preparing himself to admit he has fallen in love with a missionary, a woman he only courted in order to win a bet. Like both "Luck be a Lady" and "How to Succeed," the ultimate modulation is

²³ I have chosen to focus on the musical theater literature, but one might make similar analytical claims about certain late-Romantic works. For example, Hugo Wolf's "Mir ward gesagt" from the *Italienisches Liederbuch* is a song in which the second half is a step higher than the first. In many ways, its long-range melodic and prolongational structures resemble Loesser's "How to Succeed."

Dolce
(under dialogue)

(SKY) You're finding out something I've known for quite a while

8 **Slowly and freely**
SKY

My time of day is the dark-time— A cou - ple of deals be - fore dawn When the street — be - longs to the

13 **Tenderly**
p

cop — And the jan - i - tor — with the mop — And the gro - cer - y clerks are all gone — When the

EXAMPLE 13. "My Time of Day," published vocal score. "My Time of Day" from *Guys and Dolls* by Frank Loesser © 1950 (Renewed) Frank Music Corp. All Rights Reserved.

19 *Proudly*

smell of the rain - washed pave-ment Comes up clean and fresh and cold And the street lamp - light

24

fills the gut - ter with gold That's my time of day My time of day, And you're the on - ly doll I've ev - er want - ed, to

29 *rit.*

share it with me. (SKY) "You're the first person I've ever told it to" they embrace I've

fp *pp* *sfz* *p rit.* *con moto non troppo* *accel.* *ten.* *f* *pp* *ten.* *6* *Segue*

EXAMPLE 13. [continued]

foreshadowed by earlier harmonic motions, in this case by preliminary visits to G major and G minor (measures 12–18). Also, both the melodic contrast between B and B \flat in measures 12–18 and the implicit modulation to B \flat in measure 19 foreshadow the opening key of “I’ve Never Been in Love Before.”

Each tonal region that is touched upon corresponds to a different phase in Sky’s dramatic transformation. The various tonicizations also generally accompany motivic or thematic changes, thereby projecting a series of relatively disjointed narrative events. Example 14 contains an analytical foreground sketch. Because this song is short, episodic, and fairly terse, I will tell my analytical tale line by line, discussing tonal regions, counterpoint, and their textual correspondences.

My time of day is the dark time (measures 8–9). The song opens with one of the most difficult-to-sing lines in all of Loesser’s work. In fact, it is widely rumored that Loesser wrote “A Woman in Love” for the cinematic version of *Guys and Dolls* because Marlon Brando could not handle “My Time of Day.”²⁴ The awkward melodic leaps include a tritone

between scale degrees $\hat{6}$ and $\flat\hat{3}$ (more properly $\#2$) that paint “dark time,” and the diminished fourth from $\hat{1}$ down to $\#5$ on “day.” These two leaps set a chromatic stage, though both $\#2$ and $\#5$ are effectively incomplete neighbors (appoggiaturas) that scoop up to the next highest diatonic tone, they are accented both metrically and agogically and they imbue their associated text with greater figurative meaning. “Dark time,” especially, signifies far more than ‘that period between sunset and sunrise,’ rather it metonymically symbolizes the time when gamblers’ elicited activities take place.

A couple of deals before dawn (measures 10–11). The seamy undercurrents suggested here receive harmonic and melodic underscoring that undermines the stability and tessitura established at the outset. Rather than resolving to a root-position tonic in measure 10, the dominant at “dark time” moves to a weak tonic $\hat{4}$ (this truly carries tonic function, if only modestly) at “A couple of,” while the previously active melody gives way to a low drone on $\hat{5}$. This motion to an interior contrapuntal “voice” seems as tangential as the text it sets. Meanwhile, the tonic destabilization helps lead us away from F major and toward G. Indeed, at “dawn” we find ourselves on a pure D major triad, which leads to the following section in G.

24 Given how completely Loesser incorporated the infectious “A Woman in Love” into the long sequence in Havana [movie timings: 1:16:30 until 1:28:55], always diegetically and with a variety of styles, it seems difficult to believe that this was a simple matter of song substitution. The level of musical integration matches passages in the famously monothematic film noir *Laura* (1944). Interestingly, Loesser did not exactly omit “My Time of Day” from the film. At the end of the Havana scene, we hear the first 18 bars of the tune (non-diegetically and only instrumentally) [1:34:00 until 1:35:06], and, in the next scene, as Sky and Sarah are walking down the New York sidewalk just before he sings “A Woman in Love,” we hear the conclusion to “My Time of Day” (again non-diegetically) [1:35:06 until 1:36:04].

Though never sung in the film, for anyone who knows the staged musical, the reference to “My Time of Day” is clear, especially

because it underscores Sky Masterson’s prosaic expression of the song’s sentiment:

Sarah Brown (upon exiting the taxi): “We’re blocks from the mission.”

Sky Masterson: “C’mon, a little walk’ll do you good.”

SB: “What time is it?”

SM: “It’s dawn any minute.”

SB: “What makes the light so strange and white?”

SM: “Because only in Times Square the dawn gets turned on by an electrician. . . Listen.”

SB: “What?”

SM: “Footsteps. Now is the time you can hear footsteps on Broadway.”

Unlike in the original stage version, Marlon Brando’s Sky Masterson never tells Sarah his real name and he generally seems less vulnerable than any Sky Masterson who sings “My Time of Day.”

F: $\hat{3}$

8 12 16 18

My time of day is the Dark time before dawn Street Cop Janitor Mop Clerks Gone

F: I ii V_{45}^9 I [V] $\frac{4}{2}$ II^6 ii^6 $\frac{5}{3}$

Trans. #1 ($\hat{3}$) Trans. #2 (($\hat{b}3$)) Trans. #3 ($\hat{3}$) ($\hat{2}$) (end of song)

19 23 26 30

smell pavement clean fresh cold Street lamp light Fills the gutter with gold My time of day My time of day and you're the only doll I've ever wanted to share it with me

IV^7 (Bb: $I^7?$) [V^7] $bIII$ ($\hat{4}$) [V] = G: bVI V^4 5

Interlude (under Sky's dialogue: "You're the first person I've ever told it to")

G: $\hat{3}$ Bb: $\hat{1}$

Sky and Sarah embrace

30 31

I've never been in love before . . .

I ii V^6_4 [V^7] =Bb: V^7 I

EXAMPLE 14. "My Time of Day," foreground sketch

When the street belongs to the cop, and the janitor with the mop, . . . (measures 12–15). The text is set with a sequence of descending parallel first-inversion major triads: G, F, E, and D. Though it moves from tonic to dominant in G major, this passage is non-functional and textually tangential. These extra characters (the cop, the janitor, and later the absent grocery clerks) sharpen our image of the scenario, but they both stall the drama and further distract from the love song we expect Sky Masterson to be singing. Indeed, what seems set up to be a love song to Sarah instead becomes a tribute to New York City before the break of day. Similarly, the harmonies here are not explicitly connected to the whole and although G major is where the song ends, this short bit of harmonic foreshadowing hardly seems connected to the concluding G major passage from measure 26 onward. What is clear is that we have left the stable realm of F major and are now tonally meandering.²⁵

. . . and the grocery clerks are all gone (measures 16–17). The music introduces a measure of stability, but also shifts the modality from G major to G minor. The voice exchange in measures 16–17 (which appear at the end of the first system in Example 14) is a tonally grounding gesture in G and it highlights the clear melodic ascent to B \flat ₄. The arrival on that pitch is the most convincing return to the song's original tessitura, and, in many respects, the B \flat that sets "gone" appears to stem from the opening melodic note (A₄ on "My" in measure 8). This long-range harmonic motion from tonic to supertonic is not the product of a direct modulation

and G (which locally serves a tonic function in measures 10–17) has not in any way displaced F. There is, however, a real sense of shattered tonality as we move from measure 18 into measure 19.

When the smell of the rain-washed pavement comes up clean and fresh and cold (measures 19–22). This non-functional series of parallel root-position seventh chords seems incommensurate with the *fauxbourdon* in measures 12–15. There are at least two fundamental reasons that these rather similar melodic sequences produce such different effects: in measure 19, the first chord's quality, metrical and hypermetrical placement, and duration imply either that we have directly modulated to B \flat major or have at least found our way back to a subdominant in F major; and the former passage (measures 12–15) is chromatic, utilizing entirely major triads, while the latter progression of seventh chords is markedly pandiatonic for two measures (the only such passage in the song, and a unique gesture in *Guys and Dolls*), before becoming recast as chromatic, and tonally goal-oriented. Moreover, the melody at measure 19 emphasizes each chord's least stable member: the seventh. The pitch A₄ in measure 19 therefore elicits a very different tonal setting than the A₄ on which the song begins. For this reason, it would seem disingenuous to portray their relationship as prolongational, though such a musically strong return to the opening pitch might otherwise invite such a reading.²⁶

In my earlier analyses, I made the case for prolongationally relating different pitches that nevertheless assume the same functional role. By contrast, where two salient instances of the same pitch elicit quite different structural and narrative functions, it can be difficult to hear tonal prolongation. Indeed, by measure 19 in "My Time of Day," we have lost touch with the song's opening dramatic and tonal focus.

25 This non-functional sequence is akin to the introductory verse of Cole Porter's famous—even notorious—song "Love for Sale" (1930). That song features a pair of non-functional sequences of descending first-inversion chords (first triads, then seventh chords), setting the opening text "When the only sound in the empty street is the heavy tread of the heavy feet that belong to a lonesome cop" and "when the moon so long has been gazing down on the wayward ways of this wayward town" in measures 5–10 and 15–18, respectively. See Buchler, forthcoming.

26 As I will discuss later in this essay, the passage from measures 19–25 might even be interpreted as a dreamlike musical insertion.

A strong measure of tonal clarity returns with the clause “comes up clean and fresh and cold.” Though this is melodically similar to the “smell of the rain-washed pavement,” Loesser now employs purely functional harmonies—a descending fifth progression of sorts (with a possibly ironic tritone substitution on “clean”) leads us toward $A\flat$ major, which we “proudly” attain in measure 23.

And the street lamp light fills the gutter with gold (measures 23–25). This illuminated gutter is set with the clearest (locally) diatonic passage in the song, but in the scheme of things, $A\flat$ major is a rather distant tonal sphere. The temporary tonic pitch, which plays such a melodically prominent role in this passage, has very little to do with the song's opening $A\sharp$ ($\hat{3}$). The local diatonicism projects an image of stability that is further propagated by a melody that does little more than outline the ($A\flat$) tonic triad, coming to rest on $\hat{2}$ at an apparent half cadence (“gold”). This last moment before we abruptly return to the song's opening melody (and also to its narrative focus) is made especially solemn by the ornamented 4-3 suspension, a gesture that routinely signifies religiosity among the gamblers (but not the missionaries) in *Guys and Dolls*.²⁷ Loesser has allowed us to become lost in Sky Masterson's increasingly romantic vision of the night, but the melodic, harmonic, motivic, and, more broadly, dramatic continuity is shattered with the next line.

That's my time of day (measure 26).

My time of day, and you're the only doll I've ever wanted to share it with me. (measures 27–29). This final passage marks the poetic and motivic return to the opening material. Harmonically, the ascending half-step motion in the voice (from $B\flat$ to $B\sharp$) and the corresponding descending half step in the bass (from $E\flat$ to $D\sharp$) require a re-evaluation of the $E\flat$ major chord in measure 25 as $\flat VI$ in the key of G major, and the thematic reprise comes over a strong cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ chord (which, like the text, is immediately reiterated in the next measure).²⁸ Despite the new key and the unstable harmonic support, the textual and thematic return centers us again. Both tonally and dramatically we had wandered rather far afield, but it seems clear that in measure 26 $B\sharp_4$ marks the return of $\hat{3}$. Indeed, $B\sharp_4$ is far more strongly allied with the initial A_4 than is either the A_4 in measure 19 or the $A\flat_4$ in measure 23.²⁹ This seems noteworthy because both measures 19 and 23 at least arguably mark phrase beginnings; whereas by virtue of the retrospectively understood $\flat VI - V\frac{6}{4}$ progression in measures 25–26, the lyrical reprise “my time of day” lies within a surprisingly unbroken phrase. That phrase began in measure 23 and concludes in measure 29, at the end of the song's text.

In fact, the passage that begins at the anacrusis to measure 19 and concludes at “gold” in measure 25 might even be thought of as an insertion—a musical and textual interjection. It stands apart from the rest of the song in its tonal focus, harmonic materials (beginning with the unusual pandiatonicism),

27 Religious and solemn musical gestures frequently punctuate *Guys and Dolls* and serve, on the one hand, to differentiate the two different groups—the missionaries and the gamblers, and also to show how elements of the former group often arise in the latter. Other religiously inflected songs sung by gamblers include “The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game in New York” (which ends with a heavily ornamented plagal cadence) and, more famously, “Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat” (one of Loesser's two great gospel-styled showstoppers—the other being “Brotherhood of Man” from *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*).

28 This return of the opening motto in measure 26 provides a especially clear example of what Hatten calls an “arrival $\frac{6}{4}$ ” (1994, 15).

29 The non-functional return of A_4 in measure 12 is shown as a parenthetical ($\hat{3}$) in Example 14. When it is altered to $A\flat_4$ in measure 16, it seems farther removed from the initial *Kopfton* and is represented as ($\hat{3}$). Finally, at the reprise of the initial melody, now up a step, B_4 is shown as the renewed $\hat{3}$. These points also mark the transformations of Sky Masterson's narrative (and, arguably, his character).

	Formal units (sub-phrase, phrase)			Tonal region
Introduction (instrumental)	7 mm.			
My time of day is the dark time	2 mm.	4 mm.	11 mm.	FM
A couple of deals before <u>dawn</u>	2 mm.	+		
When the street belongs to the <u>cop</u> .	2 mm.	7 mm.		GM
And the janitor with the <u>mop</u>	2 mm.			
And the grocery clerks are all <u>gone</u>	2 mm.			Gm
When the smell of the rain-washed pavement	2 mm.	4 mm.	11 mm.	B♭M
Comes up clean and fresh and <u>cold</u>	2 mm.	+		
And the street lamp light	1 m.	7 mm.	= 3 mm.	A♭M
Fills the gutter with <u>gold</u> —	2 mm.		+	
↓				
That's my time of day	1 m.		4 mm.	GM
My time of day,	1 m.			
And you're the only doll I've ever wanted	1 m.			
to share it with me	1 m.			

EXAMPLE 15. "My Time of Day," annotated lyric. "My Time of Day" from *Guys and Dolls* by Frank Loesser
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and text. This passage comes across as dreamlike and surreal: perhaps uncharacteristically rustic in measures 19–20 and more than a bit solemn in measures 23–25. Indeed, a clean cut could be made from "And the grocery clerks are all gone" (measure 18) to "That's my time of day" (measure 26), effectively removing this portion of Sky's reverie without affecting the overall musical structure.³⁰

Unlike the standard four-measure units that typify musical theater literature, this song's phrase and hypermetrical

structures are erratic, perhaps even more so than the song's poetic structure. The seamless, nearly Chopinesque, mid-phrase return that brings "My Time of Day" to a close is only the most obvious case of composing against type. Example 15 provides the song's lyric, annotated with its phrase structure. While the poem clearly divides into three stanzas (of unequal length, poetic structure, and rhyme scheme), the units of musical form are far more difficult to delineate. After the unusual seven-measure introduction, the first four measures of the song seem to comprise a phrase. The fourth measure's pallid half cadence on V of ii is both unconventional and unstable (notwithstanding the fact that both major cadence

30 Many thanks to Matthew Shaftel for first noticing that measures 18 and 25 could be stitched together.

points of “How to Succeed” arrive at V of ii), and one might reasonably conclude that the first phrase resists closure until measures 16–18 (“grocery clerks are all gone”).

Even the cadence in measures 16–18 fails to satisfy. Not only do we come to rest on the supertonic, but the outer voices produce a clear voice exchange—an effective contrapuntal means of expanding a single harmony, but certainly no cadential model. Despite the weak cadential ramifications of a dangling supertonic, there is a clear disjunction (an interruption of sorts) between measures 18 and 19, the latter of which obviously begins with a new tune (arguably) in a new key, setting a new sentiment. So it might be prudent to consider measure 18 a phrase ending if only because measure 19 seems to be a phrase beginning.

The phrase (or formal unit) that commences in measure 19 reaches a sort of half cadence in its fourth measure (measure 22), but that “cadential” dominant is sharply dissonant (V_7^9 of $A\flat$) and it pushes forward toward its resolution in measure 23. Like the song’s first half (measures 8–18), one could easily understand the entire second half (measures 19–29) as a single extended phrase. And like the first half, the second half ends off tonic. This time, inasmuch as we close, it is with a strident dominant seventh in G, containing both a chordal $F\sharp$ and a melodic $F\sharp$. Rather than truly cadencing, the final dominant resolves into the segue, which begins on a G major triad and works its way to V^7 of $B\flat$, serving as an introduction to “I’ve Never Been in Love Before.”

“My Time of Day” effectively serves as a long preamble to Sky Masterson’s declaration of love. Masterson spends most of the song describing those pre-dawn hours, but his most heartfelt and vulnerable moment comes during the instrumental segue where he tells Sarah Brown that his real name is “Obadiah,” confessing “You’re the first person I’ve ever told it to.” Dramatically and tonally, the song never truly ends. While its splintered design and inconclusive structure are unique in *Guys and Dolls*, the very natural text setting (moving directly from sung into spoken prose when Sky

truly gets serious) is part and parcel of Frank Loesser’s mature style.³¹ Loesser was particularly talented at writing songs that followed a natural flow of speech. His characters sound realistic, not fanciful like those in certain Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals (such as *The Sound of Music*) where the beautiful songs call attention to themselves and often seem to suspend rather than further the drama.³²

The tonal fluctuations, inconsistent phrase structure, and absence of cadential formulas in “My Time of Day” sharply contrasts with “Follow the Fold,” one of the first songs heard in *Guys and Dolls*, and our introduction to Sarah Brown. Example 16 includes a representative excerpt from “Follow the Fold,” a wonderful imitation of Salvation Army band fare. Loesser composed it in straightforward march time with four-measure phrases (or subphrases) and almost nothing but tonic and dominant triads in C major (a single secondary dominant appears in the bridge). It never modulates, and throughout the show it almost always recurs in C major.³³ “Follow the Fold” represents the simple, emotionally detached life that Sarah Brown had been leading, and the sense of moral clarity that she felt. By the end of the first act, that clarity becomes as fractured as the formal structure of “My Time of Day.” One might even hear a faint intertextual reference to the plain diatonicism and triadic melody of “Follow the Fold” just before the arrival $\frac{6}{4}$ in measure 26 of

31 In these regards, “My Time of Day” resembles many of the songs from *The Most Happy Fella* (1956), a musical that is often placed into the opera genre. That show includes very little spoken dialog and often the songs—especially those that are consecutive within a single scene—are more like musical interludes: they don’t necessarily have strong endings, but rather proceed directly from one to another.

32 McMillin (2006) argues that most musical theater songs operate on a different temporal plane that “interrupts book time” (7–8).

33 “Follow the Fold” is heard six times in *Guys and Dolls*. The first five performances are peppered throughout the first act. We hear it for the fifth time just before Sarah and Sky go to Havana (in the first act); it does not recur again until the just after “Sit Down You’re Rockin’ The Boat,” near the end of the second act.

The "Save-a-Soul" Mission Band (*on Stage*)
March tempo

9

17

SARAH
 Fol - low the Fold and stray no more, stray no more, stray no more.

AGATHA
 Fol - low the Fold and stray no more, stray no more, stray no more.

ARVIDE
 Fol - low the Fold and stray no more, stray no more, stray no more.

CORPORAL
 Fol - low the Fold and stray no more, stray no more, stray no more.

(Orch.)

gliss.

EXAMPLE 16. "Follow the Fold," opening (measures 1–24). "Follow the Fold" from *Guys and Dolls* by Frank Loesser
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"My Time of Day." At least the beginning of the passage "And the street lamp light fills the gutter with gold" in measures 23–25 echoes the signature $\bar{3}$ -5- $\bar{1}$ arpeggiation from the title lyrics of "Follow the Fold." The moment where this especially solemn rendering of the "Follow the Fold" motto enters Sky Masterson's narrative could easily be considered a brief and understated apotheosis.³⁴

Certainly, Loesser is not unique in deploying direct stepwise modulations for the sake of dramatic intensification. One can find the same technique in songs by most of Loesser's contemporaries, including Rodgers, Loewe, Rome, and Adler and Ross. However, Loesser seems to have applied the technique in a diversity of situations unmatched by his peers and he so frequently foreshadowed the stepwise ascents with clever musical hints that even when his modulations are abrupt, they rarely seem clichéd.

I hope to have demonstrated that not all such intensifications are equally or similarly dramatic and that our analytical responses to direct modulations can reflect their rhetorical purposes. In this literature, abrupt key changes need not challenge our overall sense of tonal unity and continuity. Both the \uparrow and $+$ notations can help us acknowledge such modulations without anchoring us to more classically oriented models for progressive tonality.

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34 Michael Klein beautifully investigates the features and repercussions of this sort of "expressive transformation" of a previously simple theme in his article on Chopin's Fourth Ballade (2004, 31–32).

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