



# American Film Musical Themes and Forms

*Michael Dunne*

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## **American Film Musical Themes and Forms** Michael Dunne

The musical has been called the most popular form of entertainment in the world. This work examines the subjects, themes, and contemporary relevance of Hollywood musicals through their long popularity, placing each show in historical and political context and analyzing it in detail. *Cheer* (1934) deal with the economic crises of the Depressions. Another addresses race issues by examining the prevalence of blackface minstrelsy in the 1930s and 1940s, looking at productions like *Swing Time* (1936) and *Dixie* (1943). Rock and roll culture, which started in the 1950s and threatened America with teenage sex and rebellion, is addressed through such hits as *Girl Crazy* (1943), *Bye Bye Birdie* (1963), and *Grease* (1978). The work also explores dance as a signifier of character, the geography of musicals (such as New York or the South), fantasy settings, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and the musical biopic (mentioning biographies of such figures as Ziegfeld, Cohan, Rogers and Hart, Cole Porter, and Jerorne Kern



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