

Unveiling the Narrative Vistas: A Cultural Analysis of Select Opening Songs in Hollywood Musicals

Sajna Sanal

Abstract

Music has well established thematic, aesthetic and functional roles when added to films. In Hollywood Musical films, one of the most popular genres in the West, music plays a pivotal role in carrying the narrative forward. In this article, four introductory songs from popular Hollywood Musical films are examined to trace how they divulge the soul of the films within the first few minutes. The lyrical, the visual and the musical modes are critically analysed to trace how they become tools in the hands of the director. The spectators inadvertently enter the narrative world and gather inputs on the ideological thrust of the film.

Keywords : Cultural Analysis; Hollywood Musical; Ideology; Multimodality; Semiotics.

Music has supplied creative nourishment for films since its inception. Being present from the beginning of the film till its end, the musical score combines with the verbal dialogue and cinematic images to make the greatest possible impact on the viewer. Songs, presented as part of the diegetic world or outside it, form a potential tool in the hands of the filmmaker to intensify situations and emotions (Gorbman 1987, Chion 1994, Cohan 2001). A performed song is independently capable of communicating through disparate semiotic channels like the lyrics, the images, the melody, lighting, costumes, props, gestures and gaze (Dyer 2012). A spectator gathers inputs from the messages he receives from each of these and meaning becomes a sum total of all the semiotic features that constitute that song. Nevertheless, in the hierarchy of all the filmic features, music was considered inferior to others for a long time, till the emergence of the concepts of signification and multimodality.

As Rick Altman asserts, "When film first learned to speak, it sang instead" (131). The earliest sound films like *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *The Broadway Melody* (1929) which had very little synch-sound dialogue became instant hits primarily because of the mass appeal of the songs. An ideal fusion of songs and dances to carry forward a narrative with a significant theme is the convention of a Musical film. Musicals are often reckoned as 'discourses of happiness', as an 'escapist vision of reality' or a Utopian solution in times of an ideological vacuum in society like the Depression phase. The popularity of Musicals has waxed and waned in Hollywood but it still remains a much favoured genre to tell a fantastic story with a happy ending. Studies on Musical films were ignored until 1970s when Timothy Scheurer defined it as 'an interpretation of life' and inspired a spate of academic interventions by critics like Richard Dyer, J P Telotte, Rick Altman and Jane Feuer. Closer look at the thematic, aesthetic and representational aspects of the Musical has identified several ideological hallmarks like an escapist vision of reality, self-reflexivity, dual-focussed narrative structure, nostalgia and Utopian entertainment, gender politics and ideological disturbance, same sex friendships as pre-text and displacement of the black race (Altman 1987, Flinn 1992, Feuer 1993, Cohan 2002). What was once considered as an 'apotheosis of romance' is now viewed as ideologically pre-loaded and symbolically integrated.

Analysing the stories behind the songs of Broadway, Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley, Furia and Lasser define them as "a combination of wit and sentiment, verbal by-play and ardent emotion" (xxv). Songs appear at different stages in a film and perform different functions. 'Theme song' is most commonly heard over the opening and closing credits of a narrative film. Though it grows out of the film's narrative or foresees the character's predicament and is sometimes repeated during the film's course, theme songs are rarely powerful enough to move the audience to a higher emotional plane. Songs presented on screen by characters who are likely to sing, like professional singers or dancers, are termed 'performed songs'. Very often the song is presented on stage within the narrative world or as rehearsal or audition. Spontaneous, emotional songs sung by the characters at certain dramatic moments in their life are termed 'integral songs'. The practice of such musical outbursts that does not disrupt the narrative flow was derived from stage musicals which the audience had already accepted. Songs sometimes heard in the background, exposing the emotional condition of the characters or providing hints about the progress of the action, are considered as 'musical soliloquy' or 'internal songs' by Berliner and Furia (2002). It is either non-diegetic and heard outside the narrative world, only by the audience or diegetic and heard by the characters from

a car stereo or a staged performance, but not sung by them. Songs in musical films that lead to crucial turning points in the narrative and form part of the structure of the narrative are termed 'integrated songs'. Often such songs help in uncovering truths, finding solutions and manipulate decisions by characters. If music is a signifier of emotions, then songs with images, words and melody become manifestations of the inner impulses of the protagonists which eventually control the narrative and propel it forward (Scheurer 1974, Dyer 2012).

In spite of its artistic, thematic as well as commercial relevance, introductory theme songs have not been adequately explored from the perspective of their formal and social functions when conjoined with films. In this paper, opening songs of four popular Hollywood Musicals are analysed to ascertain how they establish the historical, ideological and social contexts of the particular film in a span of the film's first few minutes. The films selected are *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *Sound of Music* (1965) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971).

Songs are considered as a rich semiotic mix for stating emotions and feelings. Richard Dyer writes "Because they have words, songs can name and ground emotions; because they involve music, they can deploy a vast, infinitely nuanced range of affects; because they are vocally produced, they open out onto physical sensation" (5). In films, though songs are said to have played second fiddle to Broadway melodies, they are a potential platform for the filmmaker to persist within the conventions of the genre, at the same time bring in innovative changes to attract the audience. A systematic analysis encompassing the visual (actions, lighting, costumes, props, gestures and gaze), lyrical (values, participants, and agency) and melodic (pitch, melody, and phrasing) modes in a film song ensures a complete understanding of its purpose in the film.

Analysis 1 : *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), an MGM top-grossing Musical directed by Vincente Minnelli, was based on a series of short stories by Sally Benson, later published as a novel. The historical Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904 in which around 62 countries took part with their commercial and cultural products, serves as the backdrop of the film. The narrative focuses on the Smith family that is typically caught in the spirit of the Fair, progresses through the young girls' attempts at falling in love, the intimidating dominance of the head of the family, his relocated job in New York, the heartbroken family and the final resolution that upholds the tradition of the small town middle class family. The film is ranked tenth on AFI's Greatest Movie Musicals and the

songs from the film 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' and 'The Trolley Song' have been popular ever since and adapted in many future productions like *Home Alone* (1990).

The opening credits of the movie is accompanied by the chorus singing 'Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis', the most popular song in 1903-04 in Missouri and is followed by an instrumental ensemble playing key phrases from other songs in the film. It is followed by a tintype image of the Smith mansion which dissolves to unravel the bright and active image of townsfolk in the film's world. As we enter the Smith mansion in the next shot, we see Mrs. Smith and her maid in the kitchen, preparing the proverbial ketchup, and other members in the family also appear while the song 'Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis' reverberates in different keys and forms. The song is passed along from the carriage man who whistles it, to the elder son Lon who hums the song as he enters the kitchen, continued by little Agnes wet in her swim suit who adds a sneeze and a squeak to the song as she climbs the stairs, to Grandpa who is getting dressed and poses in front of the mirror and sings the song with little substitutions like 'la-la' and 'da-da' and finally in the distance a group of youngsters who arrive in a carriage sing the same song. Grandpa hears their song and looks out through the window from the limited space in the room and the camera joins him to reveal the active life on the open streets of the town. The air seems to be filled with the song and everybody, except the mother and her maid, sings it in his/her own way, while engaged in daily activities.

The fundamental duality of the film as a stylized artefact as well as a realistic referent is promulgated within the space of the opening shots of *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The first few minutes of the film reveals a strategic video dissolve, one of the first attempts by Minnelli to invoke memories of the American past. At the end of the credits, we see a black and white image of a mansion, an "ornately framed vision from the past", titled 'Summer 1903', which dissolves slowly to take on the active life of a small town, with people and carriages passing by (Altman 77). The visual mode slides easily from the world of static art (still image) to that of a represented reality (carriages, lively children, motor cars). The sight of the old-fashioned mansion appears taken out of a family album of the American heritage and the dissolve to Technicolor brings memories of the past closer to the present and the photographed moment is brought alive before us. The snapshots of the household and the ensuing passed-along song suddenly unfold a familiar world of colour, movement and sound. Towards the end of the song, when Grandpa looks out of the window, a world of youthful vigour and life opens up to juxtapose with Grandpa's restricted world

within the traditional house. But both the worlds are united with a single popular song in everyone's lips, reasserting the influence of popular culture in ordinary lives.

The lyrics emphasises the hype and pervasiveness of the St. Louis World Fair and how an entire community was looking forward to the spectacular event, scheduled for the year after. Only the choral lines are predominantly heard while the verses from the original song are eclipsed from common memory. The ubiquity of the song, albeit with missing words or misquotes, suggest that it was the spirit of the Fair and the common social activity that engulfed the public psyche rather than its specificities. It was indubitably the event of the decade and the entire community is symbolised by the multigenerational Smith family that is caught in it.

The technique of a passed-along song primarily signifies togetherness and unity. The form merges with the function and the song is an example of what Dyer calls the perfect "integration of numbers and narrative" (68). The song is heard repeatedly: in the first part of the credits, as a passed-along song in the first few minutes of the film, reprised by the young girls at other moments and finally at the end of the film, at the actual Fair, when the happy family overlooks the grand spectacle of a thousand lights. Making music is all about expressing the feeling of togetherness. Other original songs in the film like 'Under the Bamboo Tree' and 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' also affirm one's bonding with family, land and community. The undying love for one's kinsfolk forces Mr. Smith to decide to stay in his laidback hometown instead of taking the family to the fast and furious city life in New York.

The passed-along popular song, the print image of the mansion, the multigenerational characters and the making of ketchup symbolise the spirit of family and home, the cornerstone of the American cultural heritage. The formal elements of the film-the sights and the sounds of the small town-explicate the social content-the dichotomies between art/reality, family/work, and city/town- which characterise a Folk Musical. The film ends with the same song that it opened with and keeps the spectacle rooted in the togetherness of the family as seen in the opening shots, leading to a formal-social integration termed 'perfect' by Dyer (79).

Analysis 2 : *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953) is a film adaptation of the 1949 stage musical of the same name, which took shape from a novel by Anita Loos, serialised in the popular magazine *Harper's Bazaar* in 1925. The plot is spun by two show girls Lorelei Lee and Dor-

othy Shaw; the former is a blonde flapper obsessed with diamonds who has charmed Gus Esmond, the heir to a wealthy empire and the latter is her wisecracking friend in search of true love and romantic looks. Lorelei and Dorothy, immortalised by sparkling stars Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell, are good friends with contrasting views on life but a common goal of getting married. The film consists of their cross-Atlantic trip to France during which Lee attempts to seduce a wealthy businessman called Beekman, Dorothy falls in love with not-so-handsome detective Ernie Malone, a tiara goes missing that leads to misunderstandings followed by court trials and it ends with two weddings—those of Lorelei with Gus and Dorothy with Malone.

In the first shot of the film, a fully sequined black curtain is separated and the performing duo emerge in bright red sequined attire that exposes more than it conceals. They begin to perform the song 'Little Rock' on the stage, while fixing their eyes on one part of the audience in the fictional hall. They declare that they are two girls from a small town called Little Rock where they have been cheated by their lovers. The girls used to live on the poor side of the tracks but were courted by men who were unconcerned about their low origins. But the men broke the girls' hearts following which the girls roamed about 'like a little lamb' till they reached New York only to discover that in cities too men found them out and pursued them, unruffled by their poor circumstances. The girls worked hard being taken to dinners and being pampered and cuddled like an ermine and eventually grew so popular and powerful that for a moment they feel the urge to "punch the nose" of the men who broke their hearts back home. At the end of the verse, the curtain obscures the singers and a chorus sustains the theme of 'rock' to subsequently sing about the most precious rock—the diamond—and state Lorelei's materialistic manifesto—'Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friends'. The song reverts to the scintillating duo on stage and in the last verse, the singers express their obligation to the men who broke their hearts in Little Rock for instigating them to go to New York where they "did very well on Wall Street" and learnt a valuable lesson: that a girl could select as life partner a man of any stature, as long as he was a millionaire.

Visually, the gold digging flappers cheerfully flaunt their physical beauty and romp on the stage as objects for 'male gaze' during the song. They hold their hands across their hearts as they sing as if they are averring each word they utter as a factual truth. They sing and dance in perfect synchrony and look straight ahead at almost the same point till the end of the song. As they narrate that being young and determined, they had

worked round the clock, the two throw a suggestive wink at the audience. The sequinned costume is not only flashy but also helps define the ladies by their curvaceous bodies. The mise-en-scene of the song has predominantly a closed frame suggesting that the narrative represents specific incidents which take place in a limited world, within the boundaries of a hall or a room.

The seemingly frivolous lyrics of the show tune borrowed from Broadway in fact loudly proclaims that men are the same everywhere in the world for what they seek is just the same. The easiest way to manipulate men and make a name and a dime is by masquerading as a dumb blonde or a beauty with no brains. Women's identities seem to be created out of their relationships with men in this material world. The words 'little rock' are emphasised in the verse leading to a connotative adjunct in the chorus which strikes at the heart of the song and the film. Apart from the small town in Arkansas named Little Rock, the words signify the most expensive cut stone, the diamond, which is what any girl would love as a faithful companion for a lifetime. Money is what matters more than family name or character in the 1950s and all that a girl could ever wish for is a millionaire husband regardless of his age and virtues. The song promotes a purely materialistic outlook on life and provides a necessary background to the spectator to receive the rest of the film that showcases the two girls' relentless attempts to win a rich and doting husband. The words 'Wall Street' and 'banks' are metaphors for success in this material world. The mesmerising song and dance sequence asserts 'universal power of sexuality over money' as the key theme on which the film is based. The words also affirm that the fun-loving girls in show biz are not heartless or thankless ones. The phrase 'the one who broke my heart' is repeated by Marilyn Monroe each time with a kind of sensuousness and conviction that from the beginning of the film she takes the lead in attracting undivided attention.

On one level, the song caters to the phenomenon of Mulvey's 'male gaze' with Lorelei and Dorothy as potential targets. They are spangled visions on stage for the fictional audience and the actual spectators to view. But on another level, we find that the girls have fixed their gaze at someone particular in the audience whose excited self is revealed only towards the end of the song. Two pairs of female eyes gaze at Gus Esmond whom Lorelei is trying to impress with her breathy voice, seductive eyes and brightly coloured lips. The viewer-viewed dichotomy is reversed and woman becomes the viewer and man, the viewed. Moreover, though they seem to be displaying their bodies (and face acts especially by Marilyn

Monroe) to appease men, the confident air with which they sing and act gives the impression that they are in fact trying to trap men for their own advantage. Sexuality is not a weakness or vulnerability and show girls are not passive victims. Their experiences in Little Rock and New York have taught them that bodily beauty can be used to empower women and in the true conventions of a 'show musical' suggested by Rick Altman in his magnum opus *The American Film Musical*, both Lorelei and Dorothy try to beguile men to find success in life through marriage (200-271). The song also reinforces the popular myth of heterosexual relation between man (the source of money) and woman (the source of sexuality), on which the American society was founded in the 1950s.

Analysis 3: *Sound of Music* (1965), one of the most popular Hollywood musicals of all time, directed by Robert Wise, was adapted from the Broadway musical of the same name. It was loosely based on the memoirs of Maria, an Austrian woman who was sent by the convent before she took her vows, to the house of Captain Georg von Trapp, as governess to his seven motherless children. Maria deals with the belligerent children with patience, love and music and they eventually accept her into their lives. The cunning and loveless Baroness who had schemed to marry the Captain is driven away while the latter feels attracted to Maria. The Captain marries Maria and after winning the singing competition at the Salzburg Festival, the family flees from Salzburg to Switzerland as the Captain refuses to serve the Fuhrer.

The first sequence of the film is a sweeping aerial view of snow-clad mountains, glimpses of hills and rivers through clouds, vast expanses of lush green mountains, a European village, fields, an isolated church by the river, till it slowly zooms in on an open, green stretch of land between the hills where we see an open-armed lady appreciate the beauty and joy of nature. She twirls and begins the song 'The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Music'. She looks around taking in whiffs of the cool mountain air and rejoices in the lap of splendorous nature, walks around tall trees and hops across a brook, and expresses her joy as she feels one with nature. As she ends the song, the sound of the church bell reverberates in her ears and she looks worried as she realises something and runs back after collecting her hood from the ground.

The protagonist begins the song on a high note being inspired by the tall, majestic hills, which then falls to a lower note in sync with the plains from where she appreciates them and brings heavenly pleasure down to the earth. The song expresses her profound desire to sing the songs that the

hills have been singing for a thousand years and to fill her heart with those songs. The words also suggest how closely she has interacted with nature: her heart wants to imbibe every song it hears in nature, to beat like the wings of the birds, to laugh like the gurgling water of the brook as it hits the stones on its way and to sing like the lark that sincerely practices its singing every night. She confides that whenever she feels lonely, she listens to the song of the hills and the birds and feels reassured. There are three references to the church. She says her heart wishes to sigh like a chime that escapes from the bells on a breezy day and also to learn how the lark sings like chanting prayers every night. Away from the madding crowd, she feels that whenever her heart is filled with the sights and sounds in nature, it feels 'blessed'. The full-throated singing fills the vast landscape in the frame as well as the entire theatrical space, transporting the spectator to the bounteous and picturesque Austrian Alps. The sustained notes linger in the air, the melody rises and falls, quickens and slows down, each replicating the pace and loudness of the sounds in nature.

The visual impact of identifying a 'solitary Highland lass', or a 'pixie' in Altman's words, atop a green field surrounded by serene mountains stimulates the viewers and places them directly in a world filled with music, beauty and romance (48). The dreamy woman ambles through the woods, hops across the brook and absorbs nature's bounties while disclosing a spirit of freedom and adventure residing deep within her. She is so engrossed in the plenitude of natural beauty and the surrounding quietude that she forgets the passage of time and neglects her duties. As the song draws to a close, the background score also fades out to make distinct the chiming of the church bells. Her cheerful reverie is abruptly broken and the sheer joy and languor on her face is replaced by anxiety and trepidation. The free spirit that had been lost in chasing the magical mystique of nature is captured in a trice in the guilt of having ignored the postulant duties back in the nunnery.

The director uses the technique of audio dissolve to contrast romance with reality, freedom with bondage, nature with man and individual with institution. This ideal/real dichotomy characterises the Musical and exposes the internal workings of the film. The moral dilemma of choosing between what one's heart and one's head say, between right and wrong, between the good and the bad is also emphasised by the dissolve. This dilemma continues for Maria's superiors in the Nunnery who sings 'How do you Solve a Problem like Maria?' immediately after this scene. The Captain, his daughter Leisl, Maria and Rolf, the messenger boy are confounded and forced to make important, life-affecting choices at different stages in

the narrative. The song also reaffirms the myth of man's organic craving to be one with the elementary forces in nature, hindered by one's duties and obligations in social reality. Being adapted from Broadway, the film reasserts its supremacy over the stage by a captivating depiction of the Alps ranges in this opening song that has come to epitomise the Musical.

Analysis 4 : The 1971 Hollywood Musical *Fiddler on the Roof* directed by Norman Jewison, which is set in Tsarist Russia in 1905, focuses on the woes of a Jewish family living on the verge of penury in the town of Anatevka, under the threat of anti-Jew attacks. It is an adaptation of the Broadway Musical of the same name that was sourced from the book *Tevye and his daughters* by Sholem Aleichem. The plot focuses on the experiences of a poor Jewish milkman, whose fervent attempts to hold on to tradition are constantly shaken by Anti-Jew sentiments of his Gentile oppressors, his three older daughters' romantic entanglements and utter poverty in their Jewish 'shtetl' in early 1900s. In the end, Tevye has to succumb to the social catastrophe and leave his homeland before the Nazis entered Russia. The brilliant violin recital by the player perched precariously on top of a roof marks a symbolic beginning to the film which is all about life's uncertainty.

In the beginning of the Prologue 'Tradition', Tevye faces the camera and speaks on the Jewish predicament of having to stay up there on the roof like the fiddler, trying to play a simple tune, while it is their Tradition that keeps them balanced and stops them from falling down. This is followed by a sequence of images like the red flag with a golden star on it, the holy scriptures, drawings on the church walls, holy relics, candle stand, all projecting their unquestioning faith in God. Here, the musical notes are short, high pitched and sharp in keeping with the quick montage of images, suggesting ethereal, lightness and transcendence. The chorus reiterates the word 'Tradition' with 'short bursts of attack', which according to David Machin suggests energy, excitement and emotional outburst (111). This is followed by Tevye's comments on the mundane life of the Jews which are supplemented by a visual and aural montage, juxtaposing a grand operatic attitude and at the same time exposing a slice of their daily life in a rhythmic manner, offering what director Rouben Mamoulian would call 'a symphony of sounds' (qtd in Altman 299). The male and female choruses alternatively sing about the Papas, the Mamas, the Sons and the Daughters living there. It says how the Papas scramble for a living and faithfully say their daily prayers and have a final say in everything while Mamas raise the family and run a proper home. The Sons start Hebrew school at three and are shown their pretty future brides when they are hardly ten.

The Daughters learn to tend and mend and fix and prepare themselves to marry whomever Papa chooses. The spectator is directed to ponder beyond the heard words and the seen scenes to delve deeper into their mindset. The Jews are simple folk with their heads always covered, believing that one must continue to do one's duty, despite all odds, to attain divine blessing in the end. Men toil hard as tradesmen, carpenters, slaughturers, ironsmiths and tailors and the women do all the washing, cooking, and childrearing. Men are the sole bread winners, the decision makers and the only ones taught to read, whereas the women are confined to the four walls of the house attending to children and the aged. In one shot, we see a group of women apparently watching some social activity going on, but their faces are partly hidden behind the wooden bars of a window which suggests that they were isolated, invisible and voiceless whenever an important community event took place. All these patterns are followed generation after generation with no protest or alteration owing to their constant devotion to Tradition. Tevye breaks the 'fourth wall' and speaks to the spectators at irregular intervals, which shatters the dichotomies of art/reality and the lived/represented reality. The spectator is befriended by the speaker and he becomes part of the filmed reality. He speaks to the viewer just as he speaks to God whom he constantly remembers and sees close to him. The frames of the song sequence are predominantly open giving a sense that what is seen is part of a much wider field of action. It suggests that the story has a universal relevance and that it could happen to anyone, anywhere in the world.

The vocal sound quality of male and female choir also points towards the difference in perspectives and characters of men and women. Even though the musical notes are similar for verses sung by the two groups, there is a distinct difference in the voice modulation and articulation. We find assertive and forceful bass sounds for men and soft, delicate and emotionally contained sounds for women, which suggest the active and passive sections of the society respectively. The violin recital not only symbolises Jewish predicament but also affirms that observance of tradition is a constant struggle and Tevye with five daughters has all the reason to accept that dictum.

The Prologue offers an excellent way to open the story to the spectator, because as soon as it is over, the spectator is placed directly in the socio-cultural, political and historical setting of the narrative. The lyrical, musical and visual modes coalesce to unveil the dominant ideologies of the day-patriarchy, surrender to God, adherence to tradition and attachment to one's roots. No further rationalising is required for the way the

characters would behave in the following sequences. In other words, the opening song establishes the fundamental folk syntax- the indefatigable devotion to one's land and culture.

The study reveals that Musicals which are generally considered as discourses of happiness, courtship, community and celebration, are in fact powerful projections of the dominant ideology of the historical periods portrayed in the films-be it patriarchy, money, tradition or religion. What appears as joyful or soulful singing on closer look becomes an opportunity to showcase the social myths that pervade the deceptively simple lives of humans.

Unlike the musical score, a lyrical song has the potential to communicate more information using the modes of words, images and music. Words and musical notes are associative and arbitrary and can express what cannot be easily shown on screen using realistic images. The three signifying modes offers the viewer an overall idea of the dominant ideological argument of the film, equipping him with the necessary motivation to follow the gradual unfolding of the conflicts in the film and the progress towards a reconciliatory conclusion. Consequently, a lyrical song is one instance in the film where the formal element (the convention of a song) integrates with its social aspect (a general story/ the plot) to explicate the *raison d'être* of the particular film. For example, the notions of the all consuming power of sexual magnetism and money in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and that of men, religion and customs of the land that overbear the Jewish predicament in *Anatevka* are poignantly delivered through the medium of the opening song.

The Hollywood Musical is a highly conventional genre in which songs and dances are added to the narrative to buttress the formulaic structure of the film. But the songs can also be subjected to innovation and amendment to enrich the filmic experience, to manifest the director's creative abilities and also to demonstrate the talents of stars like Julie Andrews or Marilyn Monroe. In addition, as this article clearly demonstrates, the conventional prelude can also present the ideological tone and the thematic argument of a film through its multiple modes of expression.

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