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The *Dansical*: American Musical Theatre Reconfigured as a Choreographer's Expression  
and Domain

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Genres are never static; and the American musical theatre is no exception, as it continues to mature and evolve, generating many new forms in the process. One such evolutionary offspring is the all-dance musical, a particular hybrid of concert dance and musical theatre, otherwise termed the “dansical.” This dissertation defines, anthologizes, and analyzes the dansical, while correspondingly documenting and dissecting its facilitative choreography/dance paradigm within the Broadway musical arena.

The dansical begs historicization, delineation, and exploration, for its dance-dominant form seemingly negates the traditional song/dance/text model of musical theatre while simultaneously asserting a claim to “musical” status. In order to specifically address and analyze the dansical and its dance/choreographic import and impact on the Broadway stage, this dissertation first defines the form as follows: 1) The dansical is an all-dance production created by an authoritative, authorial Broadway choreographer/director and intended as a musical theatre work for a Broadway audience. 2) The dansical puts choreography and dance at the forefront -- at the expense of the components of score and book -- while the production's “star” is the choreographer.

Building upon this definition, the dissertation maps the dansical's lineage, development, and realization. The first chapter defines terms and generally historicizes Broadway dance/choreography, as well as the dansical. The following chapters set forth theoretical precepts which foreground, inform, and contextualize arguments and subsequent findings; these include Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* as interpreted and applied in musical theatre scholarship, the phenomenological self-expressive mode of performance as it

pertains to choreography/dance, and reception theory in regards to theatre venue, criticism, and spectatorship. Lastly, the following musicals/dansicals are fully addressed: 1) Broadway antecedents by choreographer/directors Asadata Dafora, Katherine Dunham, and Hanya Holm; 2) semi-realized dansicals or variants, thereof; 3) fully realized dansicals, i.e., Dancin' (1978), Dangerous Games (1989), Chronicle of a Death Foretold (1995), Fosse (1999), Swing! (1999), Contact (2002), and Movin' Out (2002). As a result of the aforementioned addresses and analyses, this dissertation aims to explore, interrogate, and illuminate the liminal concert dance/musical work that is the dansical, as well as its surrounding paradigms within the musical theatre genre.

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