

= Belle (Disney song) =

" Belle " is a song written by composer Alan Menken and lyricist Howard Ashman for Walt Disney Pictures ' 30th animated feature film Beauty and the Beast (1991) . Originally recorded by American actress and singer Paige O 'Hara and American actor Richard White , " Belle " , a mid @-@ tempo French and classical music @-@ inspired song , incorporates both Broadway and musical theatre elements . The film 's first song and opening number , " Belle " appears during Beauty and the Beast as a large scale operetta @-@ style production number that introduces the film 's heroine Belle , considered a book @-@ loving nonconformist by the townspeople of the village , who has grown weary of the provincial life in which she is supposed to live , and Gaston , the film 's narcissistic villain who wishes to desire her hand in marriage despite Belle 's rejections .

" Belle " has been universally acclaimed by film and music critics . Musically , the song has been compared to various musical numbers from the musical films West Side Story (1961) and The Sound of Music (1965) , as well as the Broadway musicals Fiddler on the Roof and She Loves Me . At the 64th Academy Awards in 1992 , " Belle " was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song , but ultimately lost to the film 's title song . The song was similarly featured in the Broadway musical based on the film , originally performed by American actress and singer Susan Egan .

= = Background = =

= = = History and writing = = =

In an attempt to replicate the unprecedented success of The Little Mermaid (1989) , Walt Disney Animation Studios decided to adapt the traditional fairy tale " Beauty and the Beast " into an animated feature film . Although originally conceived as an animated film with " no songs in it whatsoever " under the direction of Richard Purdum , Disney CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg was unsatisfied with the dark and somber direction in which the film was headed , and ultimately ordered that it be re @-@ written as a " Broadway @-@ style musical with a strong heroine " instead , similar in concept to The Little Mermaid . Disney then hired lyricist Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken to write the film 's songs and assist in the " transform [ing of] Beauty and the Beast into a musical " , the pair having just recently collaborated on scoring The Little Mermaid .

According to Menken , the " plot @-@ furthering songs " in Beauty and the Beast , including " Belle " , developed quite naturally as a result of the fact that the film was written to " almost ... exist as a stage musical " , having been " presented in the style of a traditional Broadway musical . " According to Broadway actress and singer Paige O 'Hara , who both recorded the song and provided the voice of Belle , Ashman and Menken " wanted to leave the pop music sound of Mermaid behind and go for something more Jerome Kern / Rodgers & Hammerstein " for Beauty and the Beast . The film 's songs and musical numbers , which were written to both " propel the plot " and offer " character development " , were heavily influenced by French , classical and traditional Broadway music . Additionally , Menken described " Belle " and the other Beauty and the Beast songs to The New York Times as " tangents from 18th @-@ century France " .

Written in a style that Menken would later admit is very " distant from contemporary pop " , the songwriters were initially skeptical of " Belle " , fearful of the song 's potential to " end their careers at Disney " if it was not well received . Described by the film 's producer Don Hahn as a " Gilbert & Sullivan operetta style " song , " Belle " reveals a lot of information " in a very short time " . Ashman and Menken initially doubted that the filmmakers would appreciate their very theatrical approach to animation . Much to their surprise , " Belle " was ultimately very well @-@ liked and " adored by the [creative] team " , becoming one of the film 's few songs to remain unmodified during production .

= = = Context and composition = = =

Hoping to write a song that would successfully " portray [Belle] in a world that is so protected and safe " , Ashman and Menken drew inspiration from a story @-@ telling style that is often reserved for traditional operettas . As Beauty and the Beast 's opening number , " Belle " , a " pivotal moment ... in the narrative " , plays a significant role in the film by introducing both the film 's heroine , Belle , after whom the song is named , and Gaston , the film 's villain . While Belle , a book @-@ loving and intelligent nonconformist who has grown frustrated with her predictable village life , longs for an adventure similar to the ones she reads about in her books , Gaston is a narcissistic hunter who seeks her hand in marriage . In roughly five minutes , the song explains both Belle and Gaston 's roles in Beauty and the Beast to the audience . The song also voices the opinions of the townsfolk and " sets up the overall theme and foreshadows what makes the town so oppressive to [Belle] " ; while the villagers award Belle high praise for her doubtless Beauty , they see her as odd because of her love of books and ridicule her for her non @-@ conformity . However , they appraise Gaston for his looks and masculinity .

According to Irving Tan of Sputnikmusic , " Belle " is an " idyllic , orchestra @-@ driven " musical number , written in the style of a traditional operetta . Commonly regarded as the film 's " I Want " song , a term originally coined and popularized by Ashman himself , " Belle " offers its protagonist an opportunity to " expresses her yearnings " . Described by Filmtracks.com as a " snare @-@ tapping song " , " Belle " is , according to sheet music originally published by Walt Disney Music Publishing , a Broadway @-@ inspired and musical theatre @-@ influenced song , performed at a moderate " pastorally " tempo of 80 beats per minute in the key of D major . Combined , O 'Hara 's soprano and White 's baritone vocal ranges span approximately two octaves , from the low note of A3 , sung by White , to the high note G5 , sung by O 'Hara . Additionally , actors Alec Murphy , Mary Kay Bergman and Kath Soucie 's vocals are also featured on the track . In total , " Belle " runs a length of five minutes and nine seconds .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

" Belle " has garnered widespread acclaim from both film and music critics . Filmtracks.com hailed the song as " among the most satisfying and clever cast pieces in history , " worthy of its nomination for the Academy Award for Best Original Song . Additionally , Filmtracks.com similarly lauded the song 's reprise , drawing similarities between its own instrumentation and that of " The Sound of Music " from The Sound of Music (1965) . Sputnikmusic.com 's Irving Tan described the song as " idyllic " .

Jennie Punter of The Globe and Mail hailed " Belle " as " one of the most delightful openings of any movie musical " . The New York Times ' Janet Maslin was very enthusiastic about the song , praising the way in which it advances the film 's plot , while describing " Belle " as " a spectacular opening number that captures the essence of this film 's appeal . " Additionally , Maslin drew similarities between " Belle " and some of the songs featured in the musical film West Side Story (1961) . Beliefnet called the song a " joyous introductory " . Pete Vonder Haar of the Houston Press liked both the song and its reprise , admitting to the inevitability of having to experience an " unexpected swell of emotion " when both songs are heard . Highlighting the song as one of the film 's most notable , Sandie Angulo Chen described " Belle " as an " infectious " song " that reveals how different Belle is from the other Disney heroines " . While describing the song as a " teeming ... opener " , TV Guide positively compared " Belle " to some of the songs featured in the musicals Fiddler on the Roof and She Loves Me . James Berardinelli of ReelViews described " Belle " as " the animated equivalent of Broadway show @-@ stoppers , with all the energy and audacity of something choreographed by Busby Berkeley . " Similarly , the New York Post 's Lou Lumenick also hailed " Belle " as a " show @-@ stopper " .

Ranking Beauty and the Beast Disney 's third greatest animated film while hailing it as " the best Disney movie musical , " Gregory Ellwood of HitFix wrote , " you can 't argue the cinematic joy in

numbers such as the opening ' Belle ' . " Ranking Beauty and the Beast the " Best Disney Soundtrack ... of the Past 25 Years " , Moviefone 's Sandie Angulo Chen highlighted " Belle " , commenting , " There 's an infectious quality to all of the Alan Menken and Howard Ashman songs , like the opening number of ' Belle ' (that reveals how different Belle is from the other Disney heroines) . "

= = = Accolades and legacy = = =

Alongside " Be Our Guest " and " Beauty and the Beast " , " Belle " was one of the three Beauty and the Beast songs that received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song at the 64th Academy Awards in 1992 . " Belle " ultimately lost to the film 's title and theme song . According to producer Don Hahn , Disney was actually hoping that the award would go to " Beauty and the Beast " and promoted the song heavily , spending significantly less money and attention on " Belle " . Oh No They Didn 't ranked " Belle " at number twenty in its article " The Top 25 Disney Songs of All Time " .

" Belle " is often considered one of Disney 's most underrated songs . In 2014 , the New York Post included the song among " The best (and the most underrated) Disney songs , " with author Gregory E. Miller deeming it " a musical @-@ theater classic . "

" Belle " is heavily parodied in the animated musical film South Park : Bigger , Longer & Uncut (1999) through its opening number , " Mountain Town " . Filmtracks.com described the parody as " a delightful introductory piece " . Amy Keating Rogers , a writer working on the animated television series My Little Pony : Friendship Is Magic , mentioned she was influenced by the song as she wrote " Pinkie the Party Planner " , the first musical number that appears in the musical @-@ intensive episode " Pinkie Pride " .

= = Live performances and cover versions = =

O 'Hara first performed " Belle " live at the 64th Academy Awards ceremony in 1992 , at which the song was nominated for Best Original Song . In spite of the fact that the producers of the telecast wanted well @-@ known " pop stars " to perform the song at the ceremony , Disney executives Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg were adamant that " Belle " be performed by the original artist by whom it was recorded . The producers also gave O 'Hara the option to lip @-@ synch the song . However , she opted to perform it live instead . O 'Hara was also forced to wear a rendition of Belle 's blue and white costume from the film , of which she was harshly critical because she felt that it was " much too frilly " , and Belle is supposed to dress " much simpler . " She likened the costume to something that the fairy tale character Little Bo Peep would wear . O 'Hara admitted that she was very nervous before her performance . However , actress Angela Lansbury , who provided the voice of the character Mrs. Potts in the film and was to perform " Beauty and the Beast " at the ceremony , comforted her by telling her , " Paige , if I sang like you I wouldn 't be nervous . "

In August 2011 , O 'Hara performed an abridged version of " Belle " live during the Disney Legends awards ceremony , at which O 'Hara was also a recipient . The performance was a Beauty and the Beast medley , during which O 'Hara musically combined " Belle " with " Beauty and the Beast " and " Be Our Guest " .