

# THE SOUND ERA

Musicals

## Musicals

- Often center on stars
  - Shirley Temple
  - Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers
- Converts Broadway shows and new
- Plots frequently involve performers
- Typical song form
  - Instrumental introduction
  - Verse: often clever words; not too melodic
  - Chorus: memorable; often aaba form
  - Instrumental break
  - Chorus: often just second half

## *Shall We Dance, 1937*

- Songs by George Gershwin
- Plot
  - Astaire plays Peter/Petrov, ballet dancer
  - Rogers is Linda Keane, tap dancer
  - Romantic comedy cycles...
- Scene
  - They are not speaking to each other
  - She still thinks Peter is just a ballet dancer
  - Verse/Chorus: aaba
  - Extended dance sequence with tune
  - Song furthers plot while entertaining us

## *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 1937*

- Disney's early animated feature films
  - *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* 1937
  - *Pinocchio* 1940
  - *Dumbo* 1941
  - *Bambi* 1942
  - *Fantasia* 1940, lacks story
- Snow White
  - Major financial success
  - Hybrid: animation and musical
    - Human figures sing full songs
    - Cartoon figures sing short, catchy songs

## “I’m Wishing”



- Snow White at a wishing well
- Standard form as in a musical
  - Introduction: she hums
  - Verse
  - Chorus: a a b a
    - Echo joins
    - Prince with the last note

## Dwarf Songs

- 2 simple songs in succession
- Working song
  - Form like musical, but short
  - Introduction
  - a a b (echoes) a; a a b a
  - Orchestra plays tune
- “Heigh-Ho”
  - Short, few words
  - Repeated multiple times



## Wizard of Oz, 1939



- Original musical for film
- Two composers; both win Oscars
  - Stothart: underscoring
  - Arlen: song, “Over the Rainbow”
- Underscoring
  - Primarily adaptation from other sources
  - Also uses Arlen’s songs for leitmotifs
  - Miss Gulch/Wicked Witch theme derived from “Off to See the Wizard”

## Wizard of Oz, songs



- “Over the Rainbow”
  - AFI: No. 1 song in American film
  - No verse, just the chorus
  - Form: a-a-b-a-codetta
- “If I Only Had a Brain/Heart/Nerve”
  - Strophic form spread through journey
  - Melody is also a-a-b-a
- Munchkins with short, cartoon-like songs

## Rainbow Reprise

- ❖ “Over the Rainbow” takes on a new meaning
- ❖ Instead of Oz, it begins to represent home in Kansas
- ❖ At a critical point in the movie, Dorothy sang a reprise of her song showing the change (just ba)
- ❖ This moment was cut—made children cry

