# Dance and the Hollywood Musical

Transcription of podcast 4

**Amateurs and professionals**

The third argument provided by Feuer concerning the masking of mass art is centred around amateurs and professionals. I quote: "For a movie genre which itself represents professional entertainment and which is also frequently about professional entertainers, there seems to be a remarkable emphasis on the joys of being an amateur." (Feuer, 1982, p. 13)

So what precisely do we mean by an 'amateur'? Feuer reminds us that 'amateur' comes from the Latin 'amator' - meaning 'lover'. Within the context of the Hollywood musical, this means singing or dancing for the love of it, rather than singing or dancing for professional entertainment. She suggests that in actuality folk art is a form of amateur entertainment and the film musical is a professional activity.

Yet the Hollywood musical attempts to redefine itself as folk art in order to underplay its mass art status. For instance, it tries to eliminate the commercialism of the professional movie star through giving them the folksy quality of the amateur. Several musicals are set in the folk context of a small town or in locales in which amateur entertainments could seem to emerge naturally, or else the musical stars often play amateur rather than professional entertainers or have entirely different careers.

Let’s come to our next clip, *The Harvey Girls.*

In this excerpt, how does the sequence cancel out its links to professionalism and commercialism?