

Example of movie review on scene analysis: dance girl dance

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Maureen O'Hara's role as Judy O'Brien as an aspiring ballerina in a dance troupe in Dorothy Arzner's film *Dance, Girl, Dance* is a prime example of a dancer who has to compete with another dancer for her place in the spotlight and for the male lead. The other dancer is Bubbles/Tiger Lily White, who is played by Lucille Ball and the male lead James 'Jimmy' Harris Jr. is played by Louis Hayward.

Judy and Bubbles are good friends who are both dancers. While Judy is the better dancer of the two, Bubbles is better looking and using her good looks to get her auditions. When it comes to the male lead however, there is no fairness in love and war. Judy is a ballerina and Bubbles is a burlesque dancer who tries to convince herself and others that she is capable of dancing as well as her friend and fails dismally. The film is shot in 1940 and is shot entirely in black and white.

Perhaps due to the fact that it is a black and white movie, the differences between the two female leads are more distinct. Bubbles' beauty is more apparent while Judy's moves are more obvious. Also due to the fact that it is a black and white movie, the features and expressions on both women's faces are more defined.

The opening scene shows the area surrounding the nightclub. It is night-time and there is a flashing sign which declines further and further into the background until the camera slowly descends down to the entrance of the Palais Royale where we can hear music coming from the building but as yet, cannot see what is happening inside. We see two people exiting the nightclub and begin to wonder what there is inside and what lies ahead.

Revealing scenes piece by piece gives us a feeling of expectancy as we know

that the camera is about to show us something but as yet, we are still waiting for something to happen.

Inside the nightclub we can see girls dancing from a distance. We see the audience seated at their tables. Again, slowly, slowly the camera approaches the lines of dancers moving around the audience and not through it or over it, until, without allowing us to find out which girls are the leading ladies as yet, the camera pans onto the orchestra. The pianist and the trumpeter are filmed at close range and the camera here is close up to the two most important members of the orchestra.

The camera returns to the lines of dancing girls but now focuses closely onto one of the main dancers (Maureen O'Hara). Without giving us a chance to discover what she really looks like, the camera then moves to a male member of the audience.

He is sitting all alone and seems very distressed in contrast with the dancing lady whom we saw in the beginning who is all smiles. The camera gives us a fleeting glance yet again but this time of the lonely, sad man (Louis Hayward) and moves on to the smiling dancing lady again.

The camera now focuses from one leading lady (Maureen O'Hara) on to another leading lady (Lucy Ball) at close range. Yet again, we only get a fleeting glance, even though at close range, of this dancer. We do not have time to really see what she is like and to form an opinion as to her beauty or to her dancing acumen.

Yet again at close range, the camera focuses again on Louis Hayward and this time cleverly shines a moving spotlight on him. We see his face coming and going into the light and the shadows of the picture and cannot really tell

what this man looks like.

It seems to be as though the camera is playing games with us. It reveals just a taste of what is to come and yet does not reveal all. It leaves us with a sense of curiosity and perhaps irritation that we cannot really picture the film stars and anticipate what could be about to happen. The man seems to be very irritated by the spotlight in his face however, Lucille Ball is greatly amused when she sees the spotlight playing on his face and is even more amused by his irritability of the whole situation.

The camera again closes in on the dancer at close range smiling and winking and we can finally see what she looks like. We see an attractive, cheeky dancer whom we tend to like immediately especially as she makes fun of someones' irritability with a bright spotlight. The camera seems to be playing games with us by starting off a shot in the distance and then getting closer until the shot becomes a close-up. Also, we are getting short staccato shots of people and their faces just to get an idea of what they look like but not to completely discover their talents and beauty. Also, the camera is playing on the light and darkness, darkness and shadows. Hence, all is obscure and mysterious and nothing is as it seems.

The camera then shifts back again to the man in the spotlight. He is getting more and more agitated by the light in his face and to add insult to injury, he now has a member of the dance troupe laughing and winking at him. He hides his face in shame. He is not in a mood to play games. The dancer moves back into the background and carries on with her dancing. She displays disappointment that the man is not interested in her.

In the introduction to the movie, we can see that the camera plays an

important in the making of the movie and how things progress from one scene to another. Nothing is left to chance. Everything is explained slowly and in sequence as the camera takes us from the known to the unknown. Since it is a black and white movie, this is advantageous as one can really play on the scenes in light and darkness.

It is a very impressive beginning to a movie filled with feelings and expressions, close-ups and moods. Everything is explained yet unexplained, seen yet unseen, dark and light, hurried and slow. The camera takes us exactly where it wants to take us and makes us react just as it wants us to react. Nothing is left to chance and these opening scenes are a sure indication of what the film is all about. However, to totally enjoy the element of surprise, I suggest you see the full movie as everything is not as it seems!