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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Hindi language film production industry of Mumbai, India, which is commonly referred to as Bollywood, and the film production industry of America, known throughout the world as Hollywood, have both created many musical films since sound was introduced into motion pictures in the 1920s and became the norm in the 1930s. Regardless of culture of origin, most, if not all, filmed musicals use prerecorded sound and playback technology coupled with lip-synching by actors seen on screen as tools to create the visual and aural illusions that tell a film's story. The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of singers whose voices, when paired with the bodies of entirely different actors, are used in filmed musicals, with particular focus on the experiences of Lata Mangeshkar in the Bollywood film industry of India, and Marni Nixon in the Hollywood film industry. To this end, I set out to understand how the cultures of the film industries of Bollywood and Hollywood and their host countries influenced (and continue to influence) the use of voice doubles in filmed song sequences. Therefore, this study aims to answer questions such as: Were the contributions of voice doubles treated the same in both industries? How did the singer doing the voice doubling in each culture feel about his or her work? How did audiences react to the use of voice doubles in films? Did they even notice or care if doubles were used? What kind of interplay might take place between audience opinions and filmmaker decisions about the use of voice doubles?

As a part of the discussion, I will investigate how tools such as prerecorded sound, playback, and lip-synching¹ affect the contributions of singers in the cinema traditions of India's largest film industry and the American film industry, two of the top-producing² cinema centres in the world, which for convenience I shall hereafter refer to as Bollywood and Hollywood.

1.1 Bollywood

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term "Bollywood" as: 'the motion-picture industry in India', giving the word's etymology as 'Bombay (Mumbai), traditional center of the Indian film industry + *Hollywood* (1976)'. However, this definition in its brevity does not paint a completely accurate picture of Bollywood. While academia may frown upon *Wikipedia*, its contributors sometimes do a very good job of defining words related to popular culture, and this is true of its explanation of the term Bollywood, which it describes as 'the informal term popularly used for the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, India. The term is often incorrectly used to refer to the whole of Indian cinema; it is only a part of the Indian film industry.'³ This definition, rather than combining all Indian cinema together, appropriately acknowledges the existence of Bollywood's sister cinemas which are culturally and linguistically different, using regional languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Bengali or Kannada. Dictionary and encyclopaedia sources mention the provenance of the term Bollywood (Bombay + Hollywood), but do not explain that this term began as an epithet in a magazine article written at a time 'when the divide between Indian art and popular

¹ These terms are defined in this chapter, beginning on p. 16.

² According to the Unesco Institute for Statistics, India produces more films than any other nation, an average of 1178 per year. The United States produces the second most, at an average of 554 per year. See charts online at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/culture/Pages/movie-statistics.aspx>.

³ This definition from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bollywood>.

cinema became more pronounced, gaining currency initially as a way of deriding the industry, then evolving into an affectionate and now celebratory term'.⁴

Film was first introduced to India on July 7, 1896, when France's Lumière brothers on their grand *cinématographe* tour, gave their first showing on Indian soil at Watson's Hotel in Bombay (Bose 2004: 9). Indians interested in film commenced production in many cities on the subcontinent. In fact, the first sound film to be produced in India had its provenance in Calcutta. It was a short documentary called *Melody of Love*, produced by J. J. Madan, and shown at the Elphinstone Picture Palace in Calcutta in 1929. However, the film that receives credit for being the first Indian musical *per se* is *Alam Ara* by Ardeshir Irani, which opened at the Majestic Theatre in Bombay on March 14, 1931, and was advertised as 'all talking, all singing, all dancing' (ibid. 51). Although the term "Bollywood" had not yet been thought of, the Bombay-produced *Alam Ara* demonstrated the singing and dancing that would become Bollywood's trademark. It was in the 1970s when Amit Khanna, a 'lyricist, filmmaker, cinema scholar, industry spokesperson and the president of the Film & Television Guild' would turn the use of Bollywood as an epithet on its head and use the term in a positive way, to give Hindi cinema a brand name (Jha 2005).

1.2 Hollywood

Encyclopedia Britannica defines Hollywood as 'a district within the city of Los Angeles, California' which is 'bounded by Hyperion Avenue and Riverside Drive (east), Beverly Boulevard (south), the foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains (north), and Beverly Hills (west)' but suggests that the name means much more, for the word Hollywood has become 'synonymous with the American film industry'. Creative work

⁴ As explained in the online magazine *Sight & Sound*, in an article titled "Bollywood Ending." See: <http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/9>

with film (and precursor to what would become the film industry) in the United States had actually begun on the east coast in 1892, where Thomas Edison and his assistant W. K. L. Dickson experimented with moving pictures in Edison's *Black Maria* studios in New Jersey. Edison's company, along with the Biograph company under the direction of Dickson and the Latham brothers, Otway and Grey, later formed the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) to control film distribution, which created an effective monopoly in film production and distribution. Others who wished to make motion pictures, among whom were Jewish immigrants such as Louis B. Mayer and Adolph Zukor, and Hungarian immigrants such as William Fox, were unable to compete because of MPPC domination. These men relocated to California, where they had the ability to produce movies free from MPPC constraints (Alvarez 2007).

The area in California now known as Hollywood had been inhabited by native Americans, and under Spanish rule was called Rancho La Brea. Acquired as ranchland by Mr. H. H. Wilcox in 1887, his wife Daeda chose to name the family property 'Hollywood.' By the turn of the century, Wilcox was selling plots to create a town. In 1911, drawn by the mild climate and open spaces, 'the Nestor Company opened Hollywood's first film studio in an old tavern on the corner of Sunset and Gower' (*A Short History of Hollywood* 2008). Cecil B. DeMille and D. W. Griffith soon located to California for the purpose of making movies, followed by the immigrant contingency from the New York City locale as mentioned above, and Hollywood became the new centre of the motion picture industry in America. Film became very popular with the American audience. By the early 1930s, as sound film edged silent film out in popularity, attending the movie theatre had become a popular pastime. A study in *Fortune* in 1936 found that 28% of the "prosperous", 27% of the lower middle class, and 19% of the poor

went to the cinema to enjoy a Hollywood-produced feature film once a week (Butsch 2001: 109).

1.3 Meeting Bollywood

Despite a broad undergraduate education, I was oblivious to the existence of India's film industry for most of my life. While ordering materials for the music library at which I am employed, I decided to purchase a film called *Bride and Prejudice*, which promised to be a musical retelling of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Since this is an important novel that has been retold in film format several times, it seemed appropriate to purchase the musical version for our collection.

I should make it clear that, despite its Indian setting, *Bride and Prejudice* is not a Bollywood movie; it is a so-called crossover movie⁵. *Bride and Prejudice* was produced and directed by a married couple of mixed nationality, Gurinder Chadha (of Indian descent, but born in Kenya and raised in the United Kingdom) and Paul Mayeda Berges (of Japanese-American descent), who intended to take Bollywood ideals and conventions and make them more accessible to the Hollywood audience. They incorporated Bollywood-style song and dance numbers and family values, but shortened the movie to about an hour and a half instead of the typical Bollywood duration of about three hours, and used English dialogue in place of the Hindu-Urdu dialect typical of Bollywood productions. As a cross-over film, I believe that *Bride and Prejudice* succeeds.

The plot of the movie follows Jane Austen's novel closely and is therefore accessible to the western audience. The sets, scenes and cinematography of the film create a fictional space that I found visually appealing. The music and dancing that

⁵ This expression, which dates from about 1973, is applied to a product which means 'to reach a broader audience by a change of medium or style' (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cross+over>).

accompanied it were fresh and interesting. My later investigations revealed that some critics were not particularly impressed with *Bride and Prejudice*, including its music and dancing; for example, Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* found the film shallow and without depth, calling it a 'low-octane and glassy-eyed Bollywood romp' (2004). Another critic, Philip French of *The Observer* found it 'banal and trivial' (Pais 2004).

As for my reaction, I was completely satisfied with this cinematic experience. *Bride and Prejudice* is, in my opinion, a worthwhile movie in many respects: it is visually stunning, with bright colors, attractive and talented cast members and engaging music that sounds foreign to western ears, but not foreign enough to create barriers. The singing was pleasant, the tunes were memorable, the choreography of song sequences was visually beautiful and contextually believable to a person willing to suspend disbelief in the normal way that films require. If some of the scenes in *Bride and Prejudice* were overdramatized and several of the song sequences astounding (for example, the scene in which the young lovers are joined in song on the beach by a robed gospel choir and a pair of lifeguards) audiences were able to just laugh at the absurdity of it all, willing to accept these fantasies as part of the charm of *Bride and Prejudice*.

Because I liked what I saw and heard in this film, I set out to find more like it. I watched all the bonus material on the *Bride and Prejudice* DVD, including interviews with director Gurindha Chadha and others, and learned the meaning of the word "Bollywood." I decided to watch more Bollywood films, to see if they used singing and dancing in the same way that *Bride and Prejudice* had. I researched Aishwarya Rai (who plays the role of Lalita, the Elizabeth Bennett character in *Bride and Prejudice*) and discovered some other great Bollywood films, such as the 2003 film *Kuch Naa Kaho*. Through discussions with others, I found and began my perusal of Bollywood films by watching the award-winning *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), the very successful *Kabhi*

Khushi Kabhie Gham (2001) and the long-running hit film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), among many others.

At some point in my early experience of Bollywood films, when on occasion a singing voice seemed an obvious mis-match from the speaking voice of an actor, I wondered if the actors were really singing their own songs, or whether different conventions were at work in this cinematic world that was new to me. Researching this led me to learn about playback singers in India, including the ubiquitous Lata Mangeshkar, whose shrill, high-pitched voice initially sounded odd to my ears. The dominance of this sound bewildered me, but as American social historian and culture critic Erik Davis has written, ‘while girlish squeals of the female playback singers are an acquired taste, it’s their melodic passion that ultimately pulls this strange brew over the top’ (1991: 78). That melodic passion captured me; the more I heard it the more that I accepted it and then began to enjoy it. When the playback singing did not match the speaking voices of the actors, it ceased to bother me. I found that I could accept playback practices without loss of enjoyment of song sequences in Bollywood movies.

My understanding of these practices made me curious to learn whether the same playback system had been used in the crossover movie *Bride and Prejudice*. I had watched this film under the preconception that in all movies of my prior experience, that is to say Hollywood movies, the actors you see moving their lips on the screen are always providing the voices you hear; *Bride and Prejudice* had so captivated me that I had completely believed that all the actors were singing their own songs. Since this movie was in English, not in Hindi like *real* Bollywood movies, to assume that there was no use of playback was a natural assumption, albeit a false one—and it should be noted that my assumption that all the singers in Hollywood films did their own singing was false as well.

1.4 Looking again at Hollywood

Like many people who enjoy watching Hollywood musicals, I had seen *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) and completely accepted its premise. This film is about a silent movie actress, Lina Lamont (played by Jean Hagen), whose harsh and unpleasant voice is all wrong for talkies. It shows how the studio dealt with the problem by using a ghost voice, provided by a character named Kathy Selden (played by Debbie Reynolds), to sing for Lina. I had always thought this film was just fiction; but knowing about Bollywood and its routine use of playback singers caused me to question whether actors sang—as I had always supposed—or whether ghost singers were also used in films produced by Hollywood. If the issues dramatized to comic effect in this film—an unacceptable singing voice, microphone problems, and the cost of filming retakes—were real problems in film production, all could be solved through the use of playback technology. In the film, when the primitive dubbing technology used gives their ruse away, Don Lockwood (played by Gene Kelly) says of Kathy Selden, 'That's the girl whose voice you heard and loved tonight. She's the real star of the picture.' What was Kathy Selden but a playback singer? What was Lina Lamont but a lip-syncher? But even that was a Hollywood illusion. As Neepa Majumder explains, 'When we are supposedly shown that the true source of Jean Hagen's voice is Debbie Reynolds ... this latter voice is, in fact, being dubbed by someone else who remains uncredited in the film' (Majumder 2001: 165). Clearly, from this example alone, we can see that Hollywood did and does use dubbing, lip-synching and playback in its filmed musicals.

Though Bollywood became attached to using the term 'playback' while Hollywood was more likely to use the term 'dubbing,' the process was virtually the same. In Hollywood, once studios understood the value of dubbing, they realized they could also use dubbing technology to replace bad or mediocre voices with better ones.

In Bollywood, studios could reap the technical and financial rewards of using playback in addition to improving the vocal quality of songs. Both enjoyed the benefit of freeing the camera; no longer would the whirring sound of the equipment disturb the sound of the songs being recorded (or the dialogue, for that matter). Directors could move the cameras in as close to the action as they wished and there would be no mechanical sounds heard on screen (Ries 1988: 145). Yet the idea persists that the use of dubbing and lip-synching is something that *distinguishes* Bollywood from Hollywood⁶. Clearly, filmmakers in both industries faced (and continue to face) the same challenges: technical difficulties with microphones and cameras, talented performers whose voices are inadequate for the purposes of film or whose private lives are liable to interrupt studio schedules, and production costs associated with hiring singers and musicians.

The circumstances outlined above led to the research for this dissertation, through which I learned that in these film industries all is not as it appears, nor as it sounds. Hollywood and Bollywood are both dream factories. Their shared industry, the film industry, exists to present stories. Even the most realistically presented movie can only be a reflection of real life, and is therefore necessarily incomplete. Films are representations, fabrications, fantasies, illusions. They are based on perceptions of film creators, who choose which points of view to show and which to ignore. This is true of what we see on the screen and of what we hear in the spoken words and the music. As a musician, my interest has been particularly in the singing which has been used to contribute to the telling of film stories in both Bollywood and Hollywood. I am interested in who provides these voices, and how decisions about singing voices have been made in the film industries of Bollywood and Hollywood.

⁶ See, for example, Sundar : “Unlike in Western musicals, in Hindi films actors do not sing their own lines” (2008: 146).

1.5 Playback, Dubbing and More: some definitions

The choice of words used by Bollywood, Hollywood, and their audiences to describe what occurs in song production can profoundly affect how songs and singers are perceived. Some of the words carry strong negative connotations; others are more positive. Here I will define the terminology and articulate the nuances of meaning that attach themselves to the words, despite the fact that all the words refer to similar processes:

1. Playback. This is 'the term used in the Indian film industry to refer to dubbing voice-overs in film songs' (Arnold, Garland 2000: 538). Another definition, from *Merriam Webster*, can be applied to any film industry, including both Bollywood and Hollywood, and dates from 1929, when this technology first came into use. It states that playback is 'an act or instance of reproducing recorded sound or pictures often immediately after recording.'⁷ A formalized system of playing back the recorded soundtracks, including song sequences, is entrenched in both Hollywood and Bollywood and is described in detail by Rick Altman, who reports that as far as film practices are concerned, 'nearly every important technological innovation can be traced back to the desire to produce a persuasive illusion' (1980: 7). The system Altman discusses involves prerecording film sound tracks in a studio with all the controls possible in that setting, filming the visual tracks, and then merging the two later. The pre-recorded audio tracks can be played back on the set during the filming of the visual tracks making synchronization possible, though more work is done with synchronization during the editing process.

⁷ Definition from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/playback>.

2. Doubling. According to *Merriam Webster*, this can mean ‘to replace in a dramatic role.’ In the case of singers for movies, the replacement of the voice is what is important; the body is not being replaced. However, another of the definitions given by *Merriam Webster* states ‘to avoid by doubling.’⁸ Using this definition, it could be interpreted that an actor is avoiding the responsibility to sing, or that a singer is avoiding the responsibility to act when roles are doubled. This definition can carry a negative connotation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests a definition that is even more troubling: ‘an evasion, a shift; deceitful or tricky action, double dealing’ which could suggest that the use of any sort of doubling practice in film production is deliberately tricky, intended to deceive the audience. Hollywood has reinforced the negative response to doubling by repeatedly insisting upon secrecy so the practice remains unknown. An audience unaware of deception will not complain about it.
3. Dubbing. The *Oxford English Dictionary* refers to various published sources from 1929 through 1966 to define this word, which can mean a variety of things: ‘To provide an alternative sound track to (a film or television broadcast); to mix (various sound tracks) into a single track; to impose (additional sounds) on to an existing recording; to transfer (recorded sound) on to a new record’. Another dictionary offers this definition: ‘to add (music, speech, etc.) to a film or tape recording’⁹. This might refer to adding something to what was initially thought to be a finished product. Adding a

⁸ Definitions from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/doubling>.

⁹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dub>.

singing voice where there wasn't one before, or replacing a singing voice with another one could both be dubbing practices.

4. Duping. Two meanings for this word can be associated with it in the context of film musicals. The first is simply 'to duplicate' or make a copy of—or to have two people attached to the same role. The second is fraught with negative meaning: 'to make a dupe of; deceive; delude; trick.'¹⁰ If audiences hear that a person's voice has been 'duped' (in the first sense) they may feel that they, the audience, have been 'duped' (in the second sense). Once again, this is a word whose use has probably influenced the perceived need in Hollywood productions to keep any duping that takes place a secret from the audience.
5. Ghosting: This word, used more in Hollywood than Bollywood, is charged with negativity. Like a ghost-writer, who writes for another person without receiving credit for their work, a ghost singer sings without receiving credit. Some of the meanings attached to this word carry very strongly dishonest connotations, such as 'to pay people for work not performed' and 'fabricated for positions of deception or fraud.'¹¹ Charles V. Ford defines the term in a 1996 article as: 'a form of identity theft in which someone steals the identity, and sometimes even the role within society of a specific individual' (148-149). Some people feel that voice doubling in the film industry is a form of identity theft since they are misled about the role played by an actor or an actress, and the ghost singer is completely nonexistent to the audience. Therefore, both performers are cheated, since they each have only half an

¹⁰ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dupe>.

¹¹ Definitions from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ghosting>.

identity, and the audience is cheated because there is disparity between reality and their conception of reality.

6. Lip-synching. Two meanings, 'to synchronize (recorded sound) with lip movements' and 'to match lip movements with (recorded speech or singing)'¹² are basically the flip sides of the same coin. Both methods are used in Hollywood and Bollywood, depending on whether the sound is recorded first and the visual track matched to it, or vice versa. Merriam Webster's definition adds the note of negativity that is often associated with the practice, 'to *pretend* to sing or say in synchronization with recorded sound' through use of the word pretend (emphasis added). Film technology being what it is, there must always be lip-synching of sound and image regardless of whether the singing voice is furnished by the actor seen on the screen or by an unseen singer, since sound and image are recorded separately.
7. Looping is another term worth understanding. Looping occurs when changes are made in post-production: 'the process of fitting speech [or song] to film already shot, esp. by making a closed loop of the film for one scene and projecting it repeatedly until a good synchronization of film and recorded speech [or song] is achieved.'¹³ This differs from lip-synching because it is the technician who makes the synchronization work, though sometimes if looping isn't going well—for example, if the voice when mediated by technology comes across as too shrill, or if there are idiosyncrasies of dialect that will cause disbelief in the audience, or if somehow the voice is obscured by noise, or even if the director hates the voice—a double might be called in

¹² Definition from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/lip-synching>.

¹³ Definition from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/looping>

to do post-recording that will match with lip movements on the film so that looping can be successful (Lewis 2003: 139-140).

Both Bollywood and Hollywood have routinely used playback technology to record song sequences, though the practice is variously referred to as doubling, dubbing, duping or ghosting (as defined above) coupled with lip-synching, and both have routinely employed voice doubles to prerecord songs, or to post-record during the looping part of the editing process. Because film producers in both Hollywood and Bollywood embraced sound film technology enthusiastically, they both became prodigious in their output of sound cinema for their eager audiences. If we fast forward to the present day, and look for ways to describe the differences between Hollywood and Bollywood musical films, Western critics frequently suggest that a key difference is that in Bollywood musicals, 'the actors *always* lip-synch' to pre-recorded music which is played back during filming (Wloszczyna 2002: 14), while Indian critics claim that in Hollywood musicals the songs are *always* 'sung by the actors themselves' (Bhimani 1995: 30)¹⁴. Yet as one studies the history of playback technology, it becomes apparent that the two film centres use music in very much the same way, record singing scenes in similar ways, and use the same or similar processes to arrive at the finished sound tracks for a film project.

1.6 Picturization

This term is the common appellation in Bollywood cinema to refer to the process of filming the action of singing and dancing to the recording as it is played back on the set. Merriam Webster's dictionary defines the word as: 'to make a picture of' or to 'present in pictures; *especially*: to make into a motion picture.' Clearly, this is something

¹⁴ Italics mine.

that occurs in Hollywood cinema, too, but historically has been used to refer to making a motion picture that is derived from a book. For example, a 1944 article in the New York Times refers to the making of *Dragon Seed* as a 'picturization' of Pearl Buck's novel.

In Bollywood, however, this word most often refers to song sequences, and how these are brought to life on the screen. Partha Chatterjee claims that 'the art of song picturization is unique to Indian cinema' (1995: 197) including all the cinema traditions of the sub-continent, and not Bollywood alone. Ajay Gehlawat explains that, to a member of the Indian audience, though they will have heard film songs played on the radio for several months before a film's release, 'without the "picturization" of the song, the enjoyment is incomplete' (2008). So accustomed are Bollywood audience members to film song conventions that hearing a film song causes them to wonder what its picturization will be like, so that they are encouraged to want to see the movie in order to more fully enjoy music that they already are familiar with.

Indian filmmaker Chidananda Das Gupta describes songs as the 'main ingredient' for making a film both popular and successful. He explains that the music director, and not the director of the action, is in charge of 'what is called "the picturization" of songs'; and proposes that 'if the songs are good, audiences return again and again to a film' (1980: 35).

1.7 'The Play's the Thing'

While plays are a different medium from film, both draw upon illusion-making in their staging. Although the words spoken by William Shakespeare's character Hamlet: 'The play's the thing' (*Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2) are from a stage play, they can be understood and applied as a metaphor to the films of both Bollywood and Hollywood. In Shakespeare's time, to make a play believable, actors made use of props such as actual pig entrails and blood to make injuries appear real, and genuine pig eyes if the

script called for taking an eye out (as the script of *King Lear* does). They used real cannons when cannons were called for, as in *Henry VIII* (an effect which became all too real when the theatre was burned to the ground in 1613)¹⁵. To enhance his plays, Shakespeare also used songs, though we tend not to think of his plays as musicals. Nevertheless, 'out of the 37 canonical plays of Shakespeare, there are no less than 32 that mention music in the text itself; there are also over 300 stage directions that are musical in nature' (Mikulin 2012).

Shakespeare made use of songs in a similar manner to props, as devices aimed at creating a believable illusion for the audience, to remove them temporarily from their daily existence and get them emotionally caught up in the story being unfolded on the stage, for, as stated in *Henry VIII* (Act 3 Scene 1), 'In sweet music is such art / Killing care and grief of heart.' Within plays music is sometimes artifice, but the feelings engendered through song may seem real to the audience, and may increase the intensity of audience response to the story or illusion the play creates. Similarly, the songs of Bollywood and Hollywood are employed by the film's creators to elicit emotion in the audience and draw them into the story being unfolded through film.

We do not know if Shakespeare employed off-stage singers to provide competent singing for tone-deaf actors¹⁶; that information has not survived (Robbins: 2005). Many unknown contributors were part of bringing Shakespeare's plays to life on stage. Correspondingly, both in Bollywood and Hollywood films, there are people whose talents are utilized to help motion pictures reach their full potential, yet their contributions are not well-known or celebrated. They work behind the scenes in film

¹⁵ See <http://www.william-shakespeare.org.uk/globe-theatre-fire.htm>.

¹⁶ We do know that the actors used cue scripts, with off-stage prompters whispering lines.

and their names, unlike those of the actors whose faces are seen on the screen, are not mentioned in film credits.

In the musical films created in both Bollywood and Hollywood the singers of song sequences may or may not be the actors who are seen on the screen, since many acting “stars” have been employed who cannot sing as well as they act, and so their voices have been replaced by the voices of others. These “others” are the people who, though often unknown, their voices creating an aural illusion within the film, have a very real impact on a musical film’s success.

While there is abundant research¹⁷ that treats music used in the films of Bollywood and Hollywood, few studies discuss both simultaneously, and very little research looks closely at singers specifically. In Hollywood, singing is *more* likely to have been done by the actual actors, but this is not necessarily so. In Bollywood, singing is *less* likely to have been done by the actual actors, but again, not necessarily; there are a few exceptions. However, in conventional practice, Bollywood singing voices are made known to the audience overtly through the film credits, though such was not always the case. The move from using ghost singers to openly crediting singers occurred by 1949, and has continued in this regard to the present¹⁸. In Hollywood conventional practice, when prerecorded singing is done by an individual other than the on-screen actor, the singer remains under-credited or not credited at all, and such has been the case from the beginning until the present, though sometimes credit is belatedly given on International Movie Database (IMDB) or other sources. In Bollywood, so-called playback singers are known to the public and respected in the industry. In Hollywood, singers do not have a title akin to singers in Bollywood, known instead variously as

¹⁷ See literature review, Chapter 2.

¹⁸ See Chapter 4 for details.

session singers, voice doubles, ghost singers, or dupers, and while they are known and develop reputations within the industry, their profession lacks the outside respect accorded to their counterparts in India.

People in India, generally, acknowledge the importance of song. Bonnie Wade, ethnomusicologist at UC Berkeley, states that:

[T]he voice has been considered the solo instrument par excellence in India for many centuries. The preeminence of the voice may be due in part to its status as the only instrument that can render text... Having a beautiful voice has not necessarily been a criterion for becoming a vocalist in India. The emphasis is placed instead on musicality, the ability to handle musical materials with superb control and, ultimately, with artistic sensitivity. A singer can do that with a less than resonant, or even slight raspy, voice (1979: 113).

Wade quotes the story of a king who asked a sage to teach him the craft of image-making. The sage advises that the king will not be able to make an adequate image unless he first understand paintings, which he cannot do without understanding dancing, for dancing will help him to understand the body, its shape and movement. But to dance well, one must first gain an understanding of instrumental music, which supplies the sound to which the body moves. And before one can be a good instrumentalist, one is required to have a “deep knowledge” of vocal music. The story concludes that ‘vocal music be the source of all arts’ (ibid. 114).¹⁹

Based on the culturally deep appreciation for vocal music, Indian filmmakers have accorded prominence to singing, and therefore to singers, in the telling of a film’s story as well. Indian audiences have developed an attitude of appreciation for film song singers, probably in part because they have been made aware of who these singers are. The people of America have not developed this attitude, largely because if voice doubles are used this information has usually been kept from them, often as a closely guarded secret, as if the illusion of the film would be ruined if the reality of the credits were

¹⁹ qtd. from Gosvami, *Story of Indian Music*, p.xv (unnumbered).

shared with the public. Since both Bollywood and Hollywood, like Shakespeare, believe that ‘the play’s the thing’ they are both most interested in the story the film is telling, but demonstrate different belief systems about what should be revealed and what should not be revealed to the audience: American film makers want realism in storylines and special effects, where Indians prefer fantasy; but when it comes to giving credit for behind-the-scenes work, Indian film makers are more likely to credit singers.

1.8 Example: A Romantic Duet Comparison

While Bollywood convention dictates that playback singers receive on screen credit, their film song sequences are of themselves given to the use of much illusion, if not over-the-top fantasy, in their production and picturization²⁰. Conversely, Hollywood convention usually dictates that film song sequences use production values that will result in them looking as realistic as possible, but with absolutely no mention in the film credits that a ghost singer was being used—so that the illusion that the actors seen onscreen moving their lips are actually singing is maintained. To illustrate, I will compare the romantic duet “Something Good” as seen in the Hollywood film *The Sound of Music* (1965) with the romantic duet “Tere Liye” from the Bollywood film *Veer-Zaara* (2004).

As the scene is set for “Something Good,” we see Julie Andrews as Maria walking on the grounds of the von Trapp estate. It is evening; the light is muted and matches the melancholy reflected in Maria’s posture and countenance. The audience is shown the trees, the lawn, the bench, and the gazebo close by. Since many earlier scenes in the film were shot in this setting, the audience is familiar with it and recognizes it as the von Trapp estate (though of course it is a film set). Christopher Plummer, as Baron von

²⁰ See discussion of “picturization” on p. 21.

Trapp, enters the scene and begins his conversation with Maria. The two move into the gazebo, which is even darker than the grounds. As the Baron announces that he loves Maria, and the song begins, the two become silhouettes against the still shadowy but comparatively lighter background of the estate's lawn.

The audience has no difficulty believing that the two actors are who they purport to be, in the place that they are supposed to be—the audience is drawn into the scene, and accept it as “real” because the cinematography and acting are convincing. Maria starts to sing, and the focus of the song is on her part, but she is joined in song by the man she loves, whose singing voice has been dubbed by another person. That Julie Andrews was singing for herself in “Something Good” is of course true. But both dubbing artist Marni Nixon (2006: 159) and researcher Laura Wagner (1998) credit Bill Lee with singing for Christopher Plummer in this role, though this is not widely understood. For example, scholar Peter H. Riddle says that Plummer sang—“sort of”—meaning that he sang rather badly (2003: 166).

Bill Lee, a prolific and well-respected Hollywood dubbing artist, would not have sung his personal best in this film; he would have sung appropriately for the part. The character of Baron von Trapp was unaccustomed to singing and had refused to sing for years. Had he burst forth in song with an amazing voice, there would have been a disconnect between the voice and the perceived character of the Baron, and the illusion would not have been sustainable. The fact that Andrews and Plummer are shown mostly in profile, mostly in silhouette, helps maintain the illusion that Plummer is actually singing. His lip-synchronization is good, as is Andrews', though she is lip-synching to herself while Plummer is lip-synching to Bill Lee's vocals. The scene maintains integrity because the audience believes in the song and the singers, though the reality does not extend to the credits. Even to this day, IMDB does not list Bill Lee as

a contributing artist to this film, though that was the reality, but the intent of using his voice was that the audience would believe it belonged to Plummer²¹.

As a contrast, one could not watch the Bollywood production *Veer-Zaara* (2004) without noticing the amount of illusion-making involved in the hauntingly beautiful song sequence “*Tere Liye*” which occurs in the scene where Veer and Zaara meet again after a long absence of several decades. Preity Zinta, acting the part of Zaara, enters the courtroom and sees Veer, played by Shah Rukh Khan, at a distance. Both have greying hair and the wrinkles of age splaying across their foreheads. As the two actors approach each other, they are seen to repeatedly morph from young adulthood to middle age—this is decidedly not reality, but illusion.

The picturization includes flashbacks, memories of Veer and Zaara which have been a part of what the audience has seen in the film, with various places, people and costumes included in the scene—all evidence that this song is intended to be fantasy, since all these events could not actually be happening during the singing of this song. Shah Rukh Khan and Preity Zinta are able to project the reality of their character’s emotions through their facial expressions, but this reality does not extend to the singing voices. While it is possible to believe that playback singer Roop Kumar Rathod’s voice really belongs to Shah Rukh Khan, since the two men are of an approximate age, the idea that the distinctive Lata Mangeshkar sound could emanate from Preity Zinta is in fact ludicrous.

First of all, Lata’s voice is so familiar to Indians that no one could mistake it. Second, Lata was 75 years old to Preity Zinta’s twenty-something, so the timbre is out of sync with Zinta’s character—even the older of her characters, since Zaara is seen to

²¹ For information about the technicalities of recording sound and merging it with images, I would recommend reading articles by Rick Altman.

change in age throughout the song, but not to as old as 75. However, if ever the audience were left to wonder if Preity Zinta is really singing that song, they would not have to wonder long, because the credits frankly state Mangeshkar's role as playback singer. She and the male vocalist, Rathod, are listed on the film credits, the soundtrack credits, and in online databases that reference the film.

These examples point out the sort of differences in the film songs of Hollywood and Bollywood that I wanted to investigate and educate myself about—the differences in how Bollywood and Hollywood present their film song sequences, use their playback singers, and give credit to film song participants. Though their approaches diverge, both remain true to the idea that 'the play's the thing,' seeking through all they do to present the story in the way that they believe will be best. In Bollywood, that means a predominance of illusion in the telling, and reality in giving credit, while in Hollywood, the opposite seems to be the prevailing practice.

1.9 Suspension of Disbelief

As is true of any film watching experience, be it a Bollywood film or a Hollywood film, the viewer will not be able to completely enjoy the film unless he or she is able to set aside preconceived notions and accept the fictional space that the film seeks to fill. Scepticism and scorn become barriers to receiving the story the film tells, but if the audience member can suspend their disbelief, then the film may seem true enough to give pleasure to the viewer.

The poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) introduced the term *suspension of disbelief* in volume two of his *Biographia Literaria*. His intention was

to describe how the reader can be moved by something fantastical²² that a writer (of poetry in particular) introduces into his work, describing that process in these words: 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith' (1907: 2:6). According to Coleridge, readers of poetry must suspend scepticism and allow themselves to imagine extraordinary and impossible things. 'Coleridge assumes—and assumes that the reader assumes—the fictional status of the poem's materials' (McGann 2004: 727). He sees poetry as an illusion that imitates or represents reality, but is not reality.

While poetry is text (and certainly was text only in Shelley's time) and film is comprised of visual and sonic elements not present in the poetic text, the same process may be said to apply to viewers of feature film. Mimesis²³ also comes into play: the idea, as expounded by Plato and Aristotle, that all works of art are mimetic, in that they represent rather than create something new. Film producers assume, and assume that viewers also assume, that a feature film is fiction: that it is a representation or imitation of reality, but is not reality. Therefore, film viewers must allow themselves to accept the illusory world the film creates, its sights and sounds, as though they are all possible. They must be willing to allow themselves to be moved by the story being told. As Broadway writer Moss Hart has expressed it, 'like it or not, the credulous eye and the quixotic heart' are requisites for audience members of any of the theatrical arts, for if they are 'hampered by incredulity' or an 'aversion to melodrama' the experience may be compromised by resultant unbelief (Hart 1959:5). Whether watching a staged

²² Though the word "fantastical" has fallen out of use, the 1828 edition of Webster's Dictionary defines it as: unreal; whimsical; capricious; fantastic. See <http://machaut.uchicago.edu/?action=search&resource=Webster%27s&word=Fantastical&quicksearch=on>.

²³ See <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/383233/mimesis>

performance or a film, resistance to believing on the part of the audience member can build a mental barrier between the viewer and the story.

1.10 Perception

In his 1998 study *The Reality of Illusion*, film scholar Joseph D. Anderson suggests that because of film's two-dimensional nature, people react to it in like manner to the way they react to events in real life. In order to understand this, think of what happens when reading words from a book. Some readers create visuals in their minds as they read—but they know that these pictures are not real. For example, if a person reads about a plane that is flying low and barely swerves in time to avoid hitting a cliff, the reader can imagine that happening and accept the event as a part of the story, but never feel that there is any real threat of hitting the cliff.

However, when the same person sees such an event in a film, the experience is entirely different; while watching this event unfold on the screen, the person may actually try to duck and move out of the way of the cliff, which their mind perceives as a real obstacle in front of them. When the person ducks, however, the view doesn't change as a result of their move, as it would in real life. At that moment, even though the person is still involved in the story of the film, there has been a reminder that it is "just a movie." For that second of time, the person sees the film from two perceptions at once: the perception of being drawn into the story being told, and the perception that the film isn't real. The moment passes, and the viewer is back to being fully involved in the illusion of the film.

Therefore, Anderson argues that perception plays an important role in the reaction of viewers to a film. The sights and sounds of films require the viewer to make choices about how to perceive, and what to perceive, and their response to the entire illusion of the film is guided by their perceptions. But their visual choices are not

completely free, of course, for possible perceptions are guided by framing decisions made by the filmmaker. Of particular importance is the fact that there *is* a frame. If the viewer looks away from the screen and sees the blank wall of the cinema, they know where the visual illusions begin and end. The filmmaker also has made choices about what to put in the frame and what not to put in the frame. Specific scenes are shown in a deliberate move to lead the perception of the audience and help to shape their viewing experience.

But a film's aural element is different—sound cannot be framed in the same way that sights can be. Most of us have probably had the experience of hearing a doorbell ring while watching a movie at home. If the movie has nothing to do with a doorbell, we know immediately that we are hearing our own doorbell ring. If a doorbell sound is called for in the movie, that sound is considered diegetic²⁴ to the film because the doorbell sound is implied by the action. Yet, because we are at home, where the doorbell sound is also a possibility, we can be momentarily confused about whether the ringing sound is a part of the film or a part of our real life²⁵. We cannot immediately tell that the sounds heard are not a part of the “frame” because there is no frame for sound.

According to film theorist Mary Ann Doane, rather than being framed, sound ‘envelops the spectator’ (1980: 39). This means that sound surrounds, seeming to come from around and behind, negotiating the space between the viewer and the screen, acting as an intermediary with the visuals. When the film involves people, the sound of their voices—or what the viewer perceives to be their voices—‘closes the gap between

²⁴ ‘Sound whose source is visible on the screen or whose source is implied to be present by the action of the film’ <http://filmsound.org/terminology/diegetic.htm>

²⁵ Michel Chion calls these sounds “acousmatic sounds,” describing them as ‘sound one hears without seeing their originating cause— an invisible sound source. Radio, phonograph and telephone, all which transmit sounds without showing their emitter are acousmatic media’ <http://filmsound.org/chion/acous.htm>.

voice and body' because while the body on the screen appears different in comparison to a body in real life (it lacks dimension, is not life-size, etc.), the voice is not changed in the same way. It sounds lifelike (though it may be amplified or enhanced), and possesses the same sort of depth that real voices carry (ibid. 43-44), helping the viewer to perceive the people on the screen as being alive, and in a sense very real because of the depth given to them through the medium of sound. Sound, therefore, helps film producers to accomplish their goal, which is to create a 'persuasive illusion' (Altman 1980: 7).

1.11 Reality in Sight and Sound

Reality is defined both as 'the state or quality of being real' and as 'resemblance to what is real.'²⁶ Cinema often has as its purpose the creation of a product that very closely resembles reality. For example, a genre of film called *cinéma vérité* (the literal meaning of which is cinema-truth) is 'a style of documentary filmmaking that stresses unbiased realism'.²⁷ Yet films do not have to be entirely realistic to show elements of this style. Many films have *cinéma vérité* moments juxtaposed against more fanciful elements.

The desire for realism has become so important to film and television that the word *reality* has been given a dictionary definition specifically for the purposes of television: according to *Merriam-Webster* this definition of reality is 'television programming that features videos of natural occurrences.' Media industries in the United States seem to be particularly concerned with the perceived need for realism. In fact, 'twenty per cent of the top grossing films of all time have had scientific or technical consultants' to help make the films as close to reality (actual truth or fact) as humanly

²⁶ These definitions from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reality>.

²⁷ This definition from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cinema+verite>.

possible (Frank 2003: 427). Despite all of western efforts at realism, however, films can never be completely real. They are not life; they are representations of life.

Early in film history, films were silent. With the emphasis on image alone, film producers enjoyed learning to shape and mould reality as expressed in a visual medium without the need to consider an aural aspect. They learned how to select what sights to include, whether to show the audience as much as possible, or to be selective and even minimalist (showing as little as possible) in choosing what to show. They learned to use a montage of images, to use close-up shots or far-away shots, all in ways that would enhance the images and illusions they wished to use to tell a story. Their illusions could not be real, because the real world is full of sound, but in their created world, 'sound was not welcome' (Altman 1980: 13). Yet some producers craved being able to recreate reality, complete with sound, on film. Thomas Edison, as mentioned earlier, always saw 'sound and vision as a pair' (ibid. 5). Rick Altman explores the entire history of the methods that were used to allow this pairing to happen, at least in the western film industry, in his 2004 book *Silent Film Sound*. For purposes of this dissertation, suffice it to say that, although producers were unable to add sound directly to film, they could at least add music.

This was accomplished in a variety of ways. Some production companies, such as Edison's Kinetoscope, sometimes made recordings specifically to be played back in the theatre while spectators enjoyed the film. The 1894 Raff & Gammon catalogue gives an example of the advertising copy for these films, which read, 'We can furnish specially selected Musical Records for use on the Kineto-Phone for nearly all the films in the foregoing list' (Ramsay 1986: 839). Other production companies relied on the theatres themselves to furnish the music, though they would provide the scores from which the music would come, or at the very least, cue sheets noting the moods they wished to

convey in various scenes. In this circumstance, musicians would rely on libraries of “mood music” held by the theatre.

Richard Hughes, a modern day silent film pianist²⁸, explains that there were 52 moods in the musical catalogue of the 1920s. Each piece was given a description such as ‘locomotive music, lament music, humorous music, chase scene music’ (Hughes 2005). From various pieces carrying the correct description, the musicians would choose which to use to match the moods indicated on the cue sheets. Who the musicians were—whether they were few or many—varied from theatre to theatre. Musicologist Gillian B. Anderson explains that ‘the accompanying forces ranged from piano or organ to piano, violin and drums to twenty-two to seventy piece orchestras’ (1987: 262) depending on what the theatre owner could afford. Musicians also may have included vocalists, especially in those instances in which silent films depicted singers.

From the 1890s to the 1920s, these depictions were most likely to include opera singers, because the grandness and eloquence of the opera spectacle was something to which film producers aspired. For example, when Thomas Edison produced a short silent film based on the Flotow opera *Martha*, his catalogue advised theatres to ‘obtain a quartette of church singers to remain behind the scenes and sing the parts and produce a remarkably fine entertainment, besides giving a local interest to the same by utilizing local talent’ (Edison 1906: 2).

In India during the silent film era, film producers also wished to include music in their films. India is a place where, as Bollywood music director Kalyanii explains, ‘life begins and ends with music. For instance, a newborn baby is greeted into the world by

²⁸ Richard Hughes researches so-called “Mood music” that was used to accompany silent films during that era. He also composes music to accompany silent films for which the music that was originally used with it has been lost. He also gives presentations using silent film and live piano performance. See <http://www.silentmovieshow.com/aboutus.htm>

songs... there is a song and dance when he weds and dies' (Marre 1985: 138). Indians expect music to play a part in their daily lives; they expect music to play a part in their entertainment.

Theatre traditions in India have lived up to this expectation, integrating acting with music and dancing, so it would be a very natural extension to include music in film. Therefore, when silent films were being shown to Indian audiences, there was usually an orchestra pit in front. Besides providing music for emotional emphasis, 'the musicians would para-dub the film, speak the dialogue impromptu for characters, narrate the storyline, explain the visual at times, and also give the background music from the foreground' (Gulzar 2003: 279). The "orchestra" was not what a westerner would recognize as such, being very small, and 'generally consisted of a harmonium and a tabla and, in more sophisticated picture halls ... a piano and a violin' (ibid.). Vocal music had an important role to play in accompanying silent film as well, which is also to be expected because Indian culture values vocal music above instrumental music²⁹. Lyrical songs of Hindustani tradition called *bandishein* and popular folk songs became part of the "impromptu" improvised sound of the film. It was not necessary that the same song or the same composition would be sung at the same situation every time a film was screened. However, since the audience participated in the music in every show by singing along, some compositions achieved popularity and came to be associated with a particular film and situation. This marked the emergence of the "film song" (ibid. 280). When film distributors and exhibitors began to notice the gusto with which their

²⁹ Lewis Rowell, in his contribution to volume 5 of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, "Theoretical Treatises," writes: "The Sanskrit word *sangita*, an exact cognate of the Latin *concentus* 'sung together', conveys the core of the ancient Indian conception of music. It is formed from the prefix *sam* 'together' and the noun *gita* 'song'. *Gita* underscores the message that the essence of Indian music is vocal sound (19)".

audiences would sing along to particular songs, they responded by 'getting verses written specifically for a situation. This brought the songwriter into film-making' (ibid.).

Thus we see that in both film production centres—which would eventually come to be known as Hollywood and Bollywood respectively—there was recognition of the importance of music to create a credible illusion. Music's ability to enhance the emotional experience for the film viewer made the visuals much more "real" and alive to the audience. Therefore, both vocal and instrumental music were incorporated into the motion picture experience. Image and sound were paired together even though synchronization of the two was not yet possible, but 'as long as each reinforces the other's lie then [audiences] will not hesitate to believe them both' (Altman 1980: 70). Just as film producers make decisions about what to include and what not to include in the visuals, so too they make those decisions about sounds and songs. Upon these decisions 'Hollywood's habit of constructing reality (as opposed to observing it) is based' (Altman 1980: 7). This constructed reality includes the sounds, music, and songs that the producers believe will make the observed images appear more life-like and believable; they are that which 'resonates and closes the gap between the reality and fantasy' (Basu 2008: 170) in the movies of both Hollywood and Bollywood. I maintain as per my research question that a crucial difference between the two feature film industries is that while Hollywood seeks to have the audience wholeheartedly believing in the reality of what is seen and heard in a film, Indian audiences 'know it's not real' (Gehlawat 2008).

Reality is not what the audience hopes to see in Bollywood films; therefore, films that try to mask illusions and present them as reality 'have historically failed at the box office' (ibid.). Indian audiences especially prefer that the picturization of film songs

bears 'no relation to any reality whatsoever' (Gehlawat 2006: 339). It follows that film-goers in India seem not to mind that it is all an illusion.

1.12 Illusion in Sight and Sound

Dictionary definitions of *illusion* vary; according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word can have a somewhat negative connotation based on deception, as in 'the action, or an act, of deceiving the bodily eye by false or unreal appearances, or the mental eye by false prospects' or 'a mental state involving the attribution of reality to what is unreal; a false conception or idea; a deception, delusion, fancy'. Merriam Webster suggests that illusion can refer to 'a misleading image presented to the vision'. These definitions could be applied to cinema, since in fact film producers do intentionally wish to lead audiences, at least enough to allow suspension of disbelief and acceptance of their created world, and they do sometimes incorporate false and unreal appearances to make this happen. But the definition that I prefer in the context of this dissertation comes from psychology: 'a perception, as of visual stimuli (optical illusion), that represents what is perceived in a way different from the way it is in reality'³⁰ which is often what cinema does: it attempts to show something or tell a story from a particular point of view using visual stimuli, and the telling of the story needs to be different from reality since the filmmaker's intent is to create a work of art that is a new and memorable experience for the viewer.

However, the cinema of today is not just a viewing experience; it is also an auditory experience. Therefore, when we speak of illusion in Bollywood and Hollywood, we must also speak of auditory illusion, since it is just as likely that filmmakers will manipulate what is heard to support their storytelling in addition to manipulating what

³⁰ These definitions from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/illusion>

is seen. The idea of auditory illusion may be more difficult for people to understand. People in general, but particularly westerners, are less aware of what they hear as compared to what they see³¹; we usually trust our ears to sort out what is heard and arrive at the truth about it without paying much attention to the means by which it happens. This is an unconscious process as the brain accepts auditory signals from both ears and then makes us aware of what the sound is and the direction from which it came (Hirst 2008: 183).

Yet sound can be manipulated to produce auditory illusion, defined in *The American Journal of Psychology* as ‘the aural equivalent of an optical illusion: the listener hears either sounds which are not present in the stimulus, or “impossible” sounds’ (Massaro 2007: 123). Much of what is heard in cinema is an aural illusion. We see someone on screen moving their lips and hear sound simultaneously. Because the sound is synchronous with the moving lips, we believe that the lips are creating the sound. Actually, the sound is coming from the theatre’s loudspeaker system. Regardless of whose voice we hear, whether it is the actor’s voice or a playback singer’s voice, in any case the sound that reaches audience members’ ears does not emanate from the supposed source, but from the unseen loudspeakers whose role is to deliver the sound to the theatre.

1.13 Western Audience Perception: Seeing is Believing

As I did exhaustive reading about playback in Bollywood and dubbing in Hollywood, it became apparent that Western audiences trust in the maxim that “seeing is believing.” If they see a person on screen who appears to be singing, they believe that person to actually be the source of the voice. But, in fact, the motion picture soundtrack

³¹ Rick Altman discusses at length the ‘western world’s privileging of vision over all other senses’ (Altman 1980a:4)

is always mediated by technology, and no sounds are immune to this mediation, including the singing voices. According to Rick Altman, professor of Cinema and Comparative Literature at Iowa State University:

[T]he sound track is a ventriloquist who, by moving his dummy (the image) in time with the words he secretly speaks, creates the illusion that the words are produced by the dummy/image whereas in fact the dummy/image is actually created in order to disguise the source of the sound. Far from being subservient to the image, the sound track uses the illusion of subservience to serve its own ends (1980b: 67).

The “ends” the soundtrack seeks to serve are realism in cinema—the picture is better, more believable, due to the manipulation of sounds and voices done by technicians in post-production. One side effect of this work can be better singing voices. The aural illusion they create has been of great service in some Hollywood musicals, providing vocal quality that has enhanced the visuals in the film and helped the leading men and women appear more versatile than they actually are. The improvements in singing make the picture better, and also improve the marketability of stars who are really good at lip-synching, since they can convince the audience that the illusion is true.

1.14 Overview of Contents

What follows is a brief overview of subsequent chapters. I will present what I have learned about how both Bollywood and Hollywood moved from a position of always using singing actors to using playback singers in situations that demanded it, and highlight the differences and similarities in their approaches to this. I will highlight specific singers and films in order to assist the reader in an understanding of each culture’s conventions and attitudes towards illusion and reality in film song sequences and in film credits. Chapter-by-chapter synopses can be found on the following pages.

1.14.1 Chapter Two: Literature Review

In the literature review, I will introduce the reader to sources consulted for this dissertation, which will be organized somewhat loosely by topic and chapter, though there is of necessity some overlap. I drew from books, popular magazines, scholarly journals, newspapers, internet articles, websites and interviews as sources of information to learn about and discuss the topics as exhaustively as possible. Scholars, journalists, actors, composers and playback singers are all people whose words, whether through books, via email, telephone conversations, or in-person interviews have contributed to my understanding of the topic.

1.14.2 Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss my research design and methodology.

1.14.3 Chapter Four: Lip-Synching to the Music

The reader of this study needs to have some basic understanding of the cinematic traditions of both film centres, Bollywood and Hollywood. It has been mentioned earlier that Thomas Edison was experimenting with film in his *Black Maria* studios as early as 1892. Although early films were silent 'Edison saw sound and vision as a pair' (Altman 1980: 5); to have the two working together was always Edison's goal, despite initial failure. It was also in 1892 that the Lumière Brothers, Auguste and Louis, began to create moving pictures. In 1895, the brothers were ready to offer their short films to audiences; the next year, they underwent a grand tour to some of the major cities of the world, Bombay, London, Montreal, New York, and Buenos Aires, thereby becoming the first to share moving pictures with paying audiences (Bose 2004: 9). The first feature-length sound film to be produced by Hollywood was *The Jazz Singer* in

1927, a product of Warner Brothers Vitaphone system (Siefert 1995: 44)³². *The Jazz Singer* had been preceded by short films made by Lee DeForest in 1923–1924 and by the Vitaphone company between 1926 and 1930, but they did not excite as much interest as *The Jazz Singer* did, most likely because of the singing the latter included.

According to Harry Warner, ‘Who the hell wants to hear actors talk? The music—that’s the big plus about this’ (Kenrick 2004). Apparently, audiences shared the sentiment and were more interested in seeing films that included music than those that did not. Advertising both in Bollywood and Hollywood supports Warner’s assertion: The first Indian musical, *Alam Ara* by Ardeshir Irani, as mentioned previously was shown in Bombay in 1931, was advertised as ‘all talking, all singing, all dancing’ (Bose 2004: 51). The same wording had been used by Hollywood in 1929 to advertise its *Broadway Melody*: ‘All talking! All singing! All dancing!’ (Ries 1988: 143).

Film songs are significant to Indian cinema, considered as ‘part and parcel of the Indian popular music industry since the pre-playback period of the thirties, when all sound was recorded live and only singers could become movie stars’ (Chute 1975: 50). Ethnomusicologist Peter Manuel suggests that the importance of song goes even further back; that its roots can be found in Marathi and Parsi theatre traditions and other folk dramatic forms throughout India, ‘all of which interspersed dialogue and action with song and dance’ (1993: 41).

Therefore when India’s first feature-length musical film *Alam Ara* was produced in 1930 and released in 1931, it was not surprising that it included seven songs. Contemporary filmmaker Shyam Benegal explains that *Alam Ara* ‘was not just a talkie. It was a talking and singing film with more singing and less talking. It had a number of

³² This film and the Vitaphone system will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

songs and that actually set the template for the kind of films that were made later' (Krishnamoorthy 2007). In this chapter, I will explain more about the history of songs and singers who worked in the film industry in both Bollywood and Hollywood. I will discuss how their histories show similarities and differences, with emphasis on the use of playback and dubbing to create illusions of sound in films produced.

1.14.4 Chapter Five: Lata Mangeshkar

This chapter will focus on one playback singer in India whose fame and influence in her country have set her apart from others who follow the same profession. As Bollywood film scholar Ganesh Anantharaman explains it, 'in tracing Lata's career, you are in effect charting the course of film music in Hindi cinema' (2008: 151). It is bewildering to the western mind that one woman's voice was used to provide the playback for a succession of Bollywood film heroines over a long career spanning more than five decades.

When Lata was over forty, her voice was used to sing for a thirteen year old girl in *Bobby* (1972); when she was seventy-five, her voice was used to sing for a twenty-five year old in *Veer Zaara* (2004). That Mangeshkar was actively working over such a long career span is unusual. That she has been chosen as the playback singer for characters far-removed from her own age, whose vocal quality her own would clearly not match, is astounding to the person who tries to understand Bollywood conventions using Hollywood standards. But Lata Mangeshkar's voice came to symbolize something beyond the persona of any actress who may have borrowed it, for it was an unchanging voice which, in the words of Neepa Majumder, 'signifies traditional purity, that transcends the female body on the screen' (2001: 178), so that an actress filmed to Lata's singing would borrow not only 'the voice of Lata Mangeshkar but also traits of her star persona, specifically her identification with traditional values' (ibid. 177).

For many music directors, Lata's voice guaranteed that soundtrack albums would sell; for producers, her voice was a guarantee that people would attend the theatre to see her songs picturized on a young and beautiful actress. For decades, Bollywood audience members have realized that Lata Mangeshkar is nothing like the stars for whom she sings, that she is a very plain lady with little stage presence, who has no flair for engaging the audience, but 'stands rigidly on stage, head buried in her notebook as she sings' (Manuel 1993: 49). Despite understanding the reality of who Lata is, the audience accepts and expects the aural illusions created by her voice to be paired with the visual illusions of other faces in Bollywood films, and consider such pairings to be a manifestation of excellence. This is the phenomenon that will be explored in greater depth in this chapter.

1.14.5 Chapter Six: Marni Nixon

The decision of the Bollywood film industry to be open about playback made it possible for a star of Lata Mangeshkar's status to emerge, but Hollywood has chosen the opposite direction: secrecy. As Marni Nixon describes it, it was 'standard practice in Hollywood to dub the voice of any star not up to vocal snuff' but 'the public was none the wiser as the studios seldom released any information about their trickery' (Nixon 2006: 85). Whereas in Bollywood, producers could announce with pride the playback singers contributing their voices to a film, Hollywood ghosts were sworn to secrecy so that the illusion that screen stars could sing well would be maintained. Therefore, since singers who provided voices for Hollywood leading men and women were neither credited nor acknowledged, any possibility of attaining the level of fame enjoyed by Lata Mangeshkar in Bollywood was impossible in Hollywood.

The person in the Hollywood film industry who came the closest to reaching fame was probably Marni Nixon, whose ghost singing became known to the public

through a series of random occurrences. Because she sang for top box office stars like Natalie Wood and Audrey Hepburn, in films that enjoyed both commercial and critical success, Marni Nixon enjoyed a measure of fame, though her ghosting was not always celebrated and was sometimes denigrated. Marni Nixon's singing would never become ubiquitous like Lata Mangeshkar's did, but Marni sang frequently enough that producers would think of her when they needed to find a singer in a hurry. They knew that their audience did not notice or care about who provided the singing voices as long as 'it looked plausible and sounded beautiful' (ibid. 86). This chapter will treat the subject of Marni Nixon and the contribution of her vocal skills to the musicals of Hollywood.

1.14.6 Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

The last chapter will summarize my research findings. I will defend my position that the use of aural illusion in film through the use of playback singers, both in Hollywood and Bollywood, has contributed much of worth to cinema. Sometimes Hollywood film credits are deceptive, allowing the viewer to believe that the faces seen on screen have supplied singing that they have not. Conversely, Bollywood's film credits tend to paint a realistic picture of contributing singers, which to non-habitual viewers may seem to expose the illusion of the film, since the voices do not always match the looks, character or age of the person being picturized. Yet audience response is determined in large part by norms of film practice they are used to, so habitual viewers of both Bollywood and Hollywood are satisfied with what they see and hear as consumers of movie magic. In this chapter, I will also suggest avenues for further research into the contribution of playback singers to the medium of film.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

As reflected in the title of this dissertation, *Illusion and Reality: Playback Singers of Bollywood and Hollywood*, the scope of this topic has required reading and studying widely in a variety of areas. As I began the research process in 2007, I read all the studies I could find that claimed to—or that I hoped would—discuss world film music, such as Mark Evans' *Soundtrack: The Music of the Movies* (1975), John Springer's *All Talking! All Singing! All Dancing!* (1966), Randall D. Larson's *Film Music Around the World* (1987), Wojcik and Knight's *Soundtrack Available* (2001), K.J. Donnelly's *The Spectre of Sound* (2005), and Roger Hickman's *Reel Music* (2006).

It seemed to me that, if the books did not specify they were about American film music, there should be mention of the film music of many countries. However, I was disappointed, because most of the books I had access to treated film music with a distinct bias in favor of western music, probably because the books were intended for the western audience, and I suppose that is an entirely valid consideration. But I was hoping to find works that treated all sorts of film music, including that of Bollywood.

Larson's short article "Film Music of India" in the 1987 compilation he edited, was the only world film music treatise that offered very much on the topic; other books that purported to cover film music comprehensively did not mention India or Bollywood at all. Taking my research a step further, I also examined books about

popular music, since Bollywood film music had been the most popular music in India for years. Once again, in study after study, Bollywood was ignored. In Tom Schnabel's *Rhythm Planet* (1998), Ravi Shankar was the only musician featured. While many of the authors whose works I read had many interesting things to say about the music of various countries in the world, there was generally silence on the topic of Bollywood film music. This was a perplexing gap, given the fact that India produces films very prolifically, and that music is and has been ubiquitous to its films since the advent of sound technology. As director Ashutosh Gowariker has said, a Bollywood film's 'music and dance are a part of its story. In fact, it would not really be an Indian film without them' (Pais 2002). With music assuming this much prominence in Bollywood film, the absence of discussion of Bollywood in books about world film music was startling.

However, the scenario changed radically by 2008. New books were released, such as Mervyn Cooke's *A History of Film Music* (2008) and Mark Slobin's *Global Soundtracks* (2008). Cooke's study focuses 'not only on dominant Hollywood practices' but also offers 'an international perspective by including case-studies of the national cinemas of the United Kingdom, France, India, Italy, Japan and the early Soviet Union' (2008: i). An entire chapter is devoted to "Global Highlights" with almost ten pages on Indian film music.

Cooke notes that Bollywood film has risen to greater heights of acceptance in world cinema. While formerly seen as 'mindless escapist entertainment' Bollywood films are 'now increasingly celebrated for their unique qualities and for promoting music to the forefront of films in a manner only matched by the Golden Age Hollywood musical' (2008: 354). The compilation of essays edited by Slobin is even more inclusive of world film music than Cooke, assigning more than half the book to global film music, with an entire chapter, by Greg Booth, on "That Bollywood Sound." In his essay's

conclusion, Booth states that ‘one of the most frustrating aspects of research in this area is the lack of any documentation about the actual life of music in the Mumbai studios’ (2008: 111) a statement with which I can concur.

However, I have the advantage of being able to read what Booth and others have written—my research profits through the stronger foundation they have laid. It has been gratifying to see these newer studies on film music that are more inclusive of cinemas outside of the American tradition; and especially to see the coverage given to Bollywood film music. Researchers are able to compare and make connections between various film music practices and conventions because of this positive change.

2.1 Bollywood Film Music

Despite initial surprises and frustrations, I was able to find ample information about Bollywood film music in other sources. Alison Arnold has done substantial research into the music of Hindi films, beginning with her 1991 doctoral dissertation. I was able to communicate with her early in my research process, and both her written work and her e-mail suggestions to me helped to get my research off to a good start. Arnold’s article, titled ‘Aspects of Production and Consumption in the Popular Hindi Film Song Industry’, published in *Asian Music* in 1993, has broadened my understanding of how the Bollywood film song reaches the masses, and the importance of the playback singer’s voice to the reception of the song by the audience.

Arnold’s 1991 book on film song, *Hindi Filmi Git: On the History of Commercial Indian Popular Music* elaborated on what I had read in the article, explaining the typical film song in terms of its ‘homogeneous vocal style, lush orchestration, avoidance of topical contemporaneity, corporate origin, and the entire glittery and unreal world of cinema’ to which it belongs (1991: 171-172). Alison Arnold was also a contributor to the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (2000), in which her discussion on the music of

North India treated film music in the greater cultural context and was most informative about setting Bollywood film music apart from other film music traditions in the subcontinent. Paul D. Greene wrote the South Indian article for the same encyclopedia, and I also appreciated his viewpoint, which elaborated more on Bollywood film music conventions, this time in comparison with the southern film industries such as that of the Tamil language.

Sampoorn Singh Kalra (1936–) an Indian poet, lyricist and director, best known by the pen name Gulzar, has contributed several articles to the *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* (2003); while the complete encyclopedia was useful and informative to me in understanding film song in context, I am most especially indebted to Gulzar's contribution. He said that 'music always reflects the times and the people, because it keeps a record of harmony in society' (2003: 278). One aspect of harmony in society that Gulzar helped me to understand is that as Indian folk music of various regions was integrated into film, most particularly Bollywood film, it had a unifying effect on the people of the country, by allowing cinemagoers to come to appreciate and accept the music of others.

Amir Ullah Khan, writing in the same encyclopedia, stressed that 'as long as films continue to be made in India, songs will be critical to films' (2003: 299); his article helped to reinforce the idea that film song is not just an accessory to film in India, but that it is an essential ingredient that sets Bollywood film in particular apart from the film conventions of other places. Another contributor to the encyclopedia, Maithili Rao, also reinforced this by stating 'Music continues to be a popular and unique part of Hindi films. Not so long ago, people around the world and the sophisticated audience found the song and dance routine of Hindi cinema absurd. Yet, today this is being touted ... in the global entertainment place' (2003: 151). I appreciated the passion for their

country's cinema that all three of these men brought to their writing and their insider's understanding of Bollywood cinema.

Rajinder Kumar Dudrah's 2006 treatise, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies* has contributed to my understanding of Bollywood within its cultural context. Dudrah emphasizes that film acts as a bridge for the people of India in many ways: between tradition and modernity, between one ethnic group's music and another's, between classical and popular performance styles, between the sacred and the secular. He notes that through film, the spectator can join in 'communal singing, dancing, sitting, eating, and praying together as a family unit' as those events unfold on the screen, usually in the context of a film song (2006: 56).

Peter Manuel's (1993) research into popular music in India was also particularly helpful for an understanding of where and how film music fits into society norms. He explains the clear supremacy of film music in the culture, since:

The thousands of songs recorded by Lata Mangeskar have a much wider audience than the music of Ravi Shankar, or the Punjabi ballads of Hir and Ranjha. Further, much of the traditional culture that many modern Indians apprehend comes via the medium of the commercial entertainment industry—particularly films (1993: xiv).

Manuel then discusses the impact of cassette technology on film songs, which technology made them more widely available to the ordinary citizenry of India, thereby assisting film music in becoming 'the single most widespread popular-music genre' (ibid. xii) in the subcontinent.

Several writers contributed to my understanding of the early history of Hindi film in India, before the name Bollywood had been applied to it. Jack Howard's 1952 article was the oldest source, offering an early review of historical information about India's early film industry. Howard related that the character of the Bombay film industry was shaped by efforts of film producers to satisfy an audience marked by 'high

illiteracy, diverse languages, religious opposition' (1952: 218); who watched films looking for entertainment and escape. In order to satisfy the audience, films were formulated to include a little of 'everything'—they became the masala films that have come to be considered the Bollywood norm, with action, romance, introspection, and music all combined. Films were lengthy—averaging three hours—and were always 'accompanied by songs—at least 14 or 16 popular songs for each movie' (ibid. 220).

Chidananda Das Gupta's 1980 article for *Film Quarterly* helped me to understand how film songs were used in that decade. There had been some change since 1952—the average number of songs in each film had decreased, but 'song and dance interludes must still hold up the narrative, although there is today more of an effort to weave them into the story' (1980:35). Gupta reinforces what I discuss in further detail in Chapter Four, that the industry was at the time being monopolized by the voices of 'two sisters, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle—who between them sing some 500 film songs each year. Their reassuring soprano voices are dubbed into scenes with no thought of tonal perspective; no matter how near or distant a character is, the song remains at the same volume' (ibid.)

Gupta emphasized that audience attendance at the cinema would inevitably be tied to their opinion of film songs. In Gupta's view, the traditions reinforced through film and film music had a stabilizing effect. An Indian filmmaker, Mani Kaul, of the same time period, had a different opinion. He wrote in 1981 about the bolstering of Indian traditions through the use of film music, but saw this as having negative consequences. He felt that Bollywood's 'popular cinema is extremely conservative, extremely orthodox... it reinforces the social institutions of society and makes them more oppressive' (1981: 100). Both Gupta and Kaul are Bollywood insiders, but with differing opinions about the influence of film music and society on each other.

Jeremy Marre and Hannah Charlton, in their collaborative book *Beats of the Heart* (1985), concluded that the use of songs in films lies at the very 'heart of Bollywood films' (142). Their suggestion was that songs make or break a Bollywood film: good songs equal good films. Marre and Charlton supported their point of view by quoting Bollywood music director Kalyanji Virgi Shah (of the Kalyanji-Anandji duo³³) who said, 'I feel that we are definitely ahead of other countries in music.... We try to write songs so simple that they can be hummed by everybody. Every song should be as simple as a nursery rhyme. This is where our art as music directors lies' (Marre 1985: 141-142). Some might argue that simple music is not necessarily good music, but at least good in this instance means memorable, and memorable songs help to connect the audience to the film in Bollywood conventions. Teri Skillman's contribution to the 1986 *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, which gave a historical survey of film music in the Bombay film industry, also confirmed the importance of song to the Bollywood film. She said:

Film song is the popular Indian music and has achieved this status through transcending cultural, religious, linguistic, caste and class barriers, by appealing to the ethos common to all Indian traditions and societies. Film song can be heard on every kind of occasion and in all locations—at weddings, religious celebrations, political rallies, in tea shops, temples and private homes (1986: 143).

She explains that the audience is interested in how well a song is rendered by the singer, and how stunning the visuals that accompany the song are, rather than how realistic, logical or appropriate the song is. If a song is emotionally stirring and appeals to the senses of sight and sound, then the audience is happy with it. Edward O. Henry, writing in 1988, talked about the effect of popular music, 'consisting largely of film

³³ Many successful film music composers in Bollywood are actually songwriting duos. Film credits and publications often refer to them in hyphenated forms such as Shankar-Jaikishen, Vishal-Shekhar, Anand-Milind, Nadeem-Shravan, Kalyanji-Anandji or Salim-Sulaiman. Sometimes they are mistakenly thought of as one person with a hyphenated name, and are seldom referred to without their partner's name attached.

songs' on the younger people of India. He explained, 'Young men sing snatches of it (film songs) to each other in their evening rambles around their village, and boys and girls alike make up their own verses to film song tunes' (20). With Marre, Charlton, and Skillman, Henry agrees that Bollywood film songs are simple, memorable, and linked to the daily life of the average person in India who is exposed to them.

The 1995 New Delhi publication *Frames of Mind: Reflections on Indian Cinema* contained several articles that were useful to my research. Contributors Partha Chatterjee, Rashmi Doraiswamy, Amrit Gangar and B. D. Garga, Deepa Gehlot, and editor Aruna Vasudev wrote articles on various topics that offered invaluable background information that created a framework in my mind upon which I could sort out and categorize other pieces of information as I went about my research and subsequent learning. I will briefly indicate highlights of my learning from their articles. Partha Chatterjee's article summarized the importance of the film song to Bollywood film by saying:

It is difficult to think of a really memorable film without melodious songs filmed befittingly. The song and all its components—words, tune, rendering and recording—become the most expressive single element in our films. And in the finished film its visual expression became crucial to not only its commercial success but also in establishing its artistic credibility (217).

Rashmi Doraiswamy's article looked at some of the problem areas in Bollywood that are associated with film songs. He noted first of all the tendency to make film songs a 'packaged product' (182) inserted gratuitously into a film to drive box office success. He also discussed copyright laws, and noted that plagiarism sometimes occurs. In an industry where many songs are called for, it is possible there can be 'a change of note here, a chord there and a bit of re-orchestration, and a "new" song is born' (181). Doraiswamy addressed censorship, relating India's long history of a censorship board to keep films family-friendly. Unlike complete films, which must receive censorship

review, songs which are filmed and released early as film advertising do not have this requirement, so sexy songs are broadcast. Doraiswamy believes that any gains made to the film by the inclusion of these songs are lost in the 'emotional and rhythmic impact and thematic dovetailing' (182) that results.

Amrit Gangar's article focused on the technical side of film songs, tracing the use of a single system for both sound and image, when playback singing was not a possibility, to the present day when so much of what we hear in film has been mediated by technology. B. D. Garga's essay focused on the Hindi film industry throughout the 1930s, just as sound technology was changing the way films were made. His words were especially helpful in understanding the first feature length film with sound in India, *Alam Ara*, after which "stars who lacked mike-friendly voices" disappeared (18) and playback singers took over as the singing voices for lead actors and actresses in the Hindi film industry.

Deepa Gehlot contributed an article to *Frames of Mind: Reflections on Indian Cinema* that focused on the stars of Bollywood. She explains some of the oddities of star power in the industry, such as the precedence of the acting stars and the music over the script. She relates, 'In the business of proposal-making, where the stars are signed first and then the music recorded, the script of the film is the least important part of the film' (232) and then explains why persona and sound trump dialogue in Bollywood films. Lastly, I was helped by the article written by the book's editor, Aruna Vasudev, who interviewed various Bollywood film directors about their point of view—what they are trying to achieve through film. Several of them explained ideas of fantasy in ways that were useful to me. For example, Ketan Mehta said of filmmaking:

It is a process that you get in terms of dreams. And dreams are the most fascinating aspects of life and living. Cinema comes closest to human dreams. It excites the entire being, from the subconscious to the totally conscious

relationship, inviting hyper-reality as a way of living. It evokes electrifying energy from within (271).

Since I am looking at film in the context of illusion and reality, these words were of great interest to me.

As I searched for information about the use of singing and songs in Bollywood film, I was interested to come across the work of Kristine Landon-Smith and her colleagues in the United Kingdom's *Tamasha*³⁴ a theatrical company whose role is (quoting their website) to be 'nurturers of artistic talent and innovative practice' all in the context of exploring cultural differences and similarities, especially focusing on the South Asian whose daily life and cultural foundation is British. In 1998, the young women who comprise *Tamasha* took an award winning Bollywood film production, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*, and morphed it into a staged musical, *Fourteen Songs, Two Weddings and a Funeral*. To fit this non-Bollywood event into my Bollywood frame of mind was an interesting and rewarding task, helping as it did to an understanding of the importance of song to culture. Asha Kasbekar reinforced this sort of cultural information in her treatise for Routledge, *Introduction to Film Studies*, emphasizing that song and dance has been 'deeply rooted' (1996: 369) in Indian performing traditions that predate film by centuries, and these traditions have carried over to the more recent film culture in India. Kasbekar also discusses the eminence of singing voices used in film, since film directors 'record at least six songs for the movie with "playback singers", many of whom have achieved the same high celebrity status as the movie stars who act and mime to their voices' (ibid. 370).

During the past decade, a young English ethnomusicologist, Anna Morcom, has written articles and books that have greatly aided my understanding of Bollywood film

³⁴ (<http://www.tamasha.org.uk/about/>)

music. Morcom's 2001 article in the *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* poses, and tries to answer, the question 'Is music used the same way in Bollywood and Hollywood?' and examines ways in which music is culture-based as opposed to being a universal language (64). Morcom explains that Hindi cinema places value on who is singing the song: the heroes and heroines, who are 'associated with goodness and upholding the moral universe' sing, while villains are never seen to sing. She notes the use of film song in Bollywood to 'accompany romantic scenes, or victorious scenes, where good is winning or fighting back, as well as the same devotional, life-cycle ritual and festival contexts as folk music' (80).

Morcom's 2007 book, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema*, delves deeply into Bollywood film song and singers. She notes changes in the industry as the older, well-entrenched singers have died or retired, and how India has been exposed to much more influence from western culture. She quotes performer and teacher Mukesh Desai, who expressed his concern about the change, saying:

This situation where visual power reigns increasingly over the aural quality of the music, is also seen in western pop music, where being young and good-looking is virtually compulsory. In India, the star status of playback singers is on the whole far less than that of the heroes and heroines, and also the nature of their stardom is very different, and largely unglamorized (203).

This article helped me to understand the changing role of the playback singer in the context of Bollywood film and audience reaction to it. Lastly, Anna Morcom's 2008 article focuses on the commercial aspect of the Bollywood film song over and above its contribution to the aesthetics of a movie it is used in. She traces early film song history, and shows that songs were popular even divorced from films, with film songs being among the top requests of Radio Ceylon's "*Binaca Geetmala*" show for many years, thereby allowing 'an unofficial and free way of advertising films' (67). Morcom documents that throughout the sixties and seventies, there was a 'creeping realization

on the part of producers that film songs could earn them money directly' (68). She comments on a change in emphasis from the beauty of the song to the commercial possibilities of the song, but shows that, over time, the audience is most interested in how songs add appeal to the film. Anna Morcom concludes that 'film songs have commercial power, but only when coupled with a Hindi film' (81).

Just as Anna Morcom values and promotes an understanding of Bollywood film beyond India's borders, so does Natalie Sarrazin, who studies both theatre and music. In a 2006 article in *Music Educators Journal*, Sarrazin encouraged the teaching of Bollywood film music in American classrooms, probing the question 'Is it possible that the most popular music in the world has been left out of most American music classes?' (Sarrazin 2006: 26). She notes that film music is 'the musical lingua franca' (27) for nonresident Indians throughout the world, and that this language should at least be given exposure, considering the size of the Bollywood film industry³⁵. Her article discusses the Bollywood convention of using playback singers, explaining that while many people in western cultures 'frown on the practice of having an actor mime a song' this is not an issue for the Indian audience, where playback singers are openly admired. Sarrazin states that:

Indians believe that playback singers are an asset to a film because they divide up the labor so that people who can act, act, and people who can sing, sing. The Indian film industry doesn't demand that actors learn to sing, thus keeping the song quality and musicality high (28).

Sarrazin contributed an article to the 2008 publication *Global Bollywood*, in which she emphasized the importance of the singer to film. In India, she states, 'voice is privileged as its sound is associated with the most fundamental human expressive characteristics.

³⁵ See footnote 2.

Cinematically, the embodied voice is one of the most powerful forces to transmit and elicit emotion' (205).

I am indebted to many natives of the Indian subcontinent whose writings about Bollywood film music have helped me to understand the Bollywood of the past and present as a part of their native culture. Nasreen Munni Kabir's 2001 book, *Bollywood: The Indian Cinema Story*, discusses the originality of Bollywood songs. Kabir, a producer and writer, believes that Hindi film songs are 'the only true original moments in a Hindi film. It is mainly the music that shows fantastic new energy and originality' (2001: 130).

Kabir's 2002 article in *Film Comment* preaches much the same message, setting a treatise on film song originality in the context of Bollywood history. She suggests that 'Indian popular cinema is all one, an energetic mix of many genres that alternate within a single film, an intricate cocktail of moods and subplots into which a number of songs and dances are woven as an indispensable expressive element' (13). Kabir notes that one of the industry's leading "music directors," Anu Malik, was stating a simple fact when he recently declared: "No music, no Hindi cinema." (Kabir 2002: 43).

Anjum Rajabali, a Bollywood script writer, penned a 2003 article for *Cinema in India* which is useful to an understanding of how songs and dances can be used as a means of expression in any sort of cinematic story. He explains that script writers call for a song to 'sing your hellos' and to 'reveal the hero's character.' If something unexpected happens, or something that is unbearable for the character, a song will be used to prolong the situation for dramatic purposes. Sometimes songs are used to create a 'parallel narrative' to the story being unfolded with the dialogue and filmed scenes. Songs can be used to 'provide a welcome relief from the relentlessness of the conflict' or to enable transition from one section of the film to another. Songs can be used for 'beautifully expressing sentiments which would've sounded vulgar or

ridiculous or self-consciously awkward in dialogue.’ Last of all, Rajabali suggests that songs can ‘mark ends and beginnings of movements, acts, sequences’ or take the audience ‘through a mood change smoothly’ (60-65). Understanding the situations that call for songs can help the uninitiated to understand why Bollywood films contain so much singing.

A good overview of the Bollywood film song is also found in Ali Sethi’s 2006 article in the *Harvard Advocate*. Sethi explains that unlike the American musical of the golden era, Bollywood film musicals have a ‘fundamentally different worldview’ in which the song-and-dance sequence is a deliberate interpolation which ‘freezes the plot and allows room for rumination’ and, acting ‘much like interior monologue in a novel’ links what has happened earlier in the film to what is about to happen in the next scene. Sethi continues, ‘It is a way of hurling aside the chains of the temporal and lingering around a tree to dwell on a sentiment, a feeling, the blossoming of a new romance. It acts as an intensifier of emotion’ (Sethi 2006: 2).

Ajay Gehlawat’s article in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* (2006) treats the same topic of the Bollywood song. He discusses how film songs become ‘forms of illusionism’ in the film which function to liberate the dreamer—in this case, the film viewer—from the ‘constraints of daydreaming’ since the film can be seen with the eyes wide open, more real and vibrant than a dream could be (333). The songs, Gehlawat suggests, create a ‘fantasyscape’ for the film viewer (338).

Manjeet Kripalani, the former India Bureau Chief of *BusinessWeek Magazine* contributed an article to *India Briefing* (2005) which is very useful for an understanding of the business side of Bollywood, and how business and art must interact for a film and its music to become successful. She compares film song to popular music elsewhere in the world and concludes that India’s preferred music is very different from much of the

songs that are popular in the west, particularly with young people. Their songs are often about 'rebellion and self-expression,' while in India 'it's about chants, and rhythm, and escapism. It's more mainstream, inclusive family fare. The era of the big American musicals of the 50s and 60s lives eternally on in India—fresh and reinventing itself all the time' (173). She believes that the world is gaining an appreciation for this kind of sound, since 'Indian melodies are invading Western music, creating hybrids in hip-hop and even mainstream pop' (ibid). These writers helped me to understand the contribution of songs to Bollywood films, and to appreciate what their many functions are within the films they serve. They also helped me to be able to compare Bollywood songs and songs in Hollywood films and elsewhere in mainstream western popular music.

2.2 Hollywood Film Music

As I learned more about Bollywood film song and the Bollywood film industry, I came to the realization that although I possessed a basic understanding of the Hollywood film industry and Hollywood film song simply from growing up with western popular culture, I needed to delve into some of the literature by experts to affirm what I already knew and to learn more that would help me to formulate ideas for my research. Fortunately, extensive literature on films and film music in Hollywood is readily available.

Roy M. Prendergast's book *Film Music: A Neglected Art* (1992) goes into much detail about the art of film scoring, and delivers information about the musical and singing as it is related to film scoring, based on his many years of experience as a pre-eminent Hollywood music editor, working steadily in the industry since 1980.

Prendergast states, in discussing the question of what music contributes to a film, that the question is irrelevant, 'for an artistic form will absorb whatever elements will

enhance it' and since music enhances film, it has been absorbed by it; the better question is to ask why a particular song is used in a particular place in the film. I also appreciated Prendergast's comments about film music and reality in a film, for he argues that 'there are certain mechanical elements about film' which 'seem to mitigate against its every being considered a "realistic" art form' (96). His opinion supports my belief that feature films are meant to be illusionary and should be accepted as such, rather than trying to force the need to mesh with reality on what is certainly a creative, imaginative, and illusory art form.

Louis Giannetti's text *Understanding Movies* (2005) provides good background information about movie making in general, from editing and movement to writing and ideology. He provides a concise chapter about sound, including music and its role in establishing 'tone, period, ethnicity and locale' as well as 'emotional appeal' (218). K.J. Donnelly treats the topic of movie sound in greater detail, with explanation and examples of diegetic and nondiegetic music³⁶. I was drawn to Donnelly's work by its title, *The Spectre of Sound*, since spectre is a word that we normally associate with ghosts—that we see. Donnelly discusses sound as an apparition-like presence in film, felt rather than seen; sensed rather than obvious; but though incorporeal, its influence is necessary, adding great depth and emotion to the film. He discusses music from 'full-blown song sequences' to background music, and suggests that music 'haunts films, both as ghostly references to somewhere else and something else, and as a mysterious manipulative demonic device' taking the listener from the 'prosaic everyday to the transcendent' (2005: 23).

³⁶ Diegetic music is that which is a part of the story-world created in the film. Therefore, if we see a person singing, their song is considered to be diegetic. Background music we hear while no orchestra can be seen in the shot would be considered non-diegetic.

2.3 Sound Technology

When I began my research into this topic, my understanding of sound technology in the film industry was rudimentary at best. The above-mentioned books about Hollywood film music all helped me to understand sound technology somewhat better, but I knew that I needed to learn more. If I was to understand how aural illusions are created in films, especially those aural illusions of song, I needed to have a thorough grasp of the history and practice of sound technology in film culture.

An early source for information about sound technology is David Forrest's 1946 article in *Hollywood Quarterly*. He is very clear about explaining how sound is recorded separately from the visuals, and the importance of the dupe room, where 'a new voice, born of many voices' (225) comes into being as a film's soundtrack. Forrest uses the term 'aural illusion' to explain what happens with sound, and that term has become very useful in my research. Forrest emphasizes—most likely to inform a readership who would prefer to believe that what they see on screen reflects what really happens in production, as if film unfolds from start to finish like a play does on a stage—that nearly all song and dance numbers we see in a movie have been heavily mediated by technology. He insists that this is a very good thing, because the:

[I]ntegration of responsibility results in a music job that is forced to make no technical concessions to picture, and a picture job that is forced to make no concessions to the difficulties and mechanics of recorded music. The procedure has a happy and rare bivalence: it is both economical and artistically ideal (Forrest 1946: 226).

Yale French Studies no.60 Cinema/Sound, published in 1980, proved to be a useful source for information about sound technology in film. Edited by Rick Altman, presently professor of Cinema and Comparative Literature at The University of Iowa, the essays in this book offer a rich foundation in how sound operates both to serve the film and to manipulate the audience. Altman himself discusses the interplay of sound

and vision, and the idea of sound track as ventriloquist, controlling the action rather than being controlled by it. The sound track moves simultaneously with the image, creating what Altman proposes to be:

The illusion that the words are produced by the dummy/image whereas in fact the dummy/image is actually created in order to disguise the source of the sound. Far from being subservient to the image, the sound track uses the illusion of subservience to serve its own ends (1980: 67).

Altman puts forward the argument that in the film industry 'nearly every important technological innovation can be traced back to the desire to produce a persuasive illusion' (7). Other essays in the *Yale French Studies no.60 Cinema/Sound* (1980) have been useful and informative to my understanding. Film theorist Kristin Thompson relates events of historical importance in early sound practices in her essay, noting how sound as used in Mickey Mouse cartoons influenced the work of Eisenstein. Thompson emphasizes the use of music to give audible expression to visuals seen on the screen, because 'just as the image is an objective perception of events, so the music expresses the subjective appreciation of this objectivity' (Thompson 1980: 135)—through the use of music in conjunction with visuals, the audience perceives with more depth, since they are both objectively and subjectively informed.

Mary Ann Doane, professor of modern culture and media at Brown University, contributes an article about the body as represented by voice, with the idea that music and song 'close the gap' between voice and body since while the image of the body is flat, the singing voice gives it depth (46). The depth is necessary so that a film's illusion will become more real to the audience. Doane cites the work of philosopher and theorist Jean-François Lyotard, who proposed that written signifiers (the film script) are turned into speech, song, and movement, for the purpose of affecting the emotions of the spectators. She quotes him as saying, 'It is this transcription on and for bodies, considered as multi-sensory potentialities, which is the work characteristic of the mise-

en-scène. Its elementary unit is polyesthetic like the human body: capacity to see, to hear, to touch to move' (Doane 1980: 47). These are the facets of film that lend depth to the medium, and help what is an illusion to seem real to the audience.

French film theorist Christian Metz, whose work draws from psychology, looked at film as able to reflect reality, though imperfectly, while also delving into the unconscious dream state. The essay he wrote for the *Yale French Studies no.60 Cinema/Sound* discusses how sound can lead image, since sounds beg the question 'sound of what?' and can be a driving force behind conceptualization of the image on the screen (1980: 25). Daniel Percheron's contribution to this volume focuses on the idea of diegesis,³⁷ and whether sounds are on or off screen or mediated through characters. The audience makes their decision about the source of sounds, including songs, based on whether or not they can see lips move. As the spectator watches (and listens) it is sound which 'reinforces the impression of reality' (Percheron 1980: 17).

French film theorist Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier's essay in the same volume is specifically about Indian song and the disembodied voice, in other words the practice of separating the body and the voice which Indian film does and admits to doing (and which Hollywood film also does but does not often admit to doing). Ropars-Wuilleumier even interprets film dialogue from a musical point of view, in terms of 'the timbre, intonation, rhythm: stops become silences, rests become intervals' (1980: 249). Lastly, Philip Rosen's contribution to this issue is about the mechanics of music, and how it is used to humanize film, disguising its mechanical source in order to hold the attention of spectators. Rosen believes that music and song quickly found a place for

³⁷ This term refers to the internal world created by the film's story. In regards to the soundtrack, if the sound emanates from something we can see onscreen, such as a person, radio or piano, it would be considered diegetic. Whereas, if we hear, for example, piano music but no piano is seen onscreen, then the music would be considered non-diegetic.

themselves in film production because of their ‘cultural role as magic.’ Because of the ‘immediate subjective inwardness’ of music and song, they could help to “exorcise” the ghostliness of the images by supplying an indication of genuine, spontaneous life’ allowing the spectator to ‘overcome the shock and accept the literal immediacy of the image’ (Rosen 1980: 173).

Rosen’s work relies heavily on the writings of film composer Hanns Eisler, whose *Composing for the Films* (1947) has also been an important source for my research. Eisler speaks about the need for film music to ‘interpose a human coating between the reeled-off pictures and the spectators. Its social function is that of cement, which holds together elements that otherwise would oppose each other unrelated—the mechanical product and the spectators, and also the spectators themselves.... It is the systematic fabrication of the atmosphere for the events of which it is itself part and parcel. It seeks to breathe into the pictures some of the life that photography has taken away from them’ (Eisler 1947: 59).

Michel Chion, the renowned film theorist who also composes film music, is also interested in the way that sound has a humanizing affect on film. His *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (1994) explains how ‘sound shows us the image differently than what the image shows alone, and the image likewise makes us hear sound differently than if the sound were ringing out of the dark’ (21). Sound, and for the purposes of my research, song, add value to film by giving the viewer the impression that what is heard comes naturally from what is seen. However, the reality is that this is not necessarily so, because ‘for a single body and a single face on the screen, thanks to syncretism³⁸, there are dozens of allowable voices” (66). Chion’s ideas are applicable particularly to

³⁸ The fusion of two or more originally different inflectional forms. See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syncretism?show=0&t=1348347877>.

Bollywood film, where the voice of someone like Lata Mangeshkar is linked over the course of her fifty-year career with all sizes, shapes and ages of bodies, from young teenagers to old women.

2.4 Bollywood and Playback Technology

With a basic knowledge of how sound technology works in the film industry, I needed to look more specifically at the recording of songs. I turned first to Bollywood, since they readily acknowledge the hand of technology in song production because they use credited playback singers. Information about Bollywood songs and playback technology can be found in a variety of sources. Once again, I began with ethnomusicologist Alison Arnold, whose writing had given me good background information about Bollywood in general. In Arnold's doctoral dissertation of 1991, she relates that when film studios were able to separate the recording of sound and picture due to changes in technology, the new process 'enabled the artist to concentrate solely upon his singing' during sound recording, and then to also turn his attention fully to acting when the picture was recorded, 'having only to move his lips in synchronization with the song lyrics being "played back" via the song recording' (1991: 102). Initially, there was no intention to use playback technology to oust the singing actor, but gradually, it became preferable to use two different people to create the character, one for acting and speaking and another for singing. Composers (called music directors in India) liked this change because they could 'create songs without having to accommodate the particular vocal limitations' of actors and actresses (ibid. 103) and then hire a singer who had the ability in range, depth, and vocal timbre, to make the most of the songs.

Arnold discusses how film song quickly became popular with audiences in India, not only in the theatre, but also as the music of choice to listen to on the radio. However,

unlike most popular music, which according to Arnold is the ‘personal expression of its performers,’ film song is much more mediated, since it is created ‘for a specific cinematic situation.’ Though film songs are recorded away from the set, in the studio, they still require the playback singer to ‘express the screen character’s emotion through his or her voice’ (2000: 531-2).

Recent monograph publications were of great value to me in understanding the use of playback technology in Bollywood films. In 2006, a book by Ashok Da. Ranade was published with the title *Hindi Film Song: Music Beyond Boundaries*. Ranade is an ethnomusicologist who is also a Hindustani classical vocalist and voice-culture expert. His approach to film song is organized by decades, discussing the people who were important to film song recording in India. Ranade discusses exactly what the vocalist must be able to do—beyond merely singing—in order to be a successful playback singer, using Kishore Kumar as an example. Kumar was able to create effects such as yodeling, whistling and *hunkar* ‘(humming superimposed on various vowel sounds)’; he was able to sigh and cough while singing; he was able to create both male and female sounding vocals; he could make his tonal quality both plain and resonant; use nasality, vibrato and tremolo as required; and create an atmosphere (for example, buoyant or introverted) with his voice (2006: 382). This kind of vocal diversity, according to Ranade, would be what a music director would be looking for when hiring a playback singer, since the intent in using a singer instead of an actor would be that the singer’s skill would exceed that of the actor, and bring something to the playback beyond what the actor could do.

Ganesh Anantharaman, a writer and film aficionado from Bangalore, wrote *Bollywood Melodies: A History of the Hindi Film Song* (2008), which was a timely publication for my research. As the title indicates, Anantharaman examines film song

and the technology used to record it from the beginning of the Indian film industry up to the very recent past. He discusses the time during which playback singers were treated as uncredited extras, whose contributions to film success were not valued; a time that was described to him by playback singer Manna Dey as being filled with 'competition, rivalry, fame and rejection' and during which the singer 'went unnoticed' (201-202). Anantharaman describes how the industry changed, and a time came during which 'playback singers would be the real superstars' (141) and a select handful of singers would contribute the vocals for thousands of songs in Bollywood film. In the present day, once again, the prominence of the playback singer is fading, and it is possible that they will never achieve the cultural stature of the old guard of playback singers such as Kishore Kumar or Lata Mangeshkar, because we now live in 'an age where music is only yet another tool of instant gratification,' so playback singers of today 'are constrained to live with the knowledge that for all their success, they are unlikely to leave any legacy for posterity' (194). Anantharaman suggests further that because 'the emphasis on music today is on instant popularity, not on creating something that is original,' (213) the songs recorded by Bollywood's playback singers probably will not be as long-lasting as in previous eras. Playback singing has gone from being the illustrious, respected profession it became during the Bollywood Golden Era to once again being a job that must be done. The respect is still there, but the lustre is gone.

A book made up of compiled essays, *Global Bollywood* (compiled by Anandam P. Kavoori) was published in 2008. Aswin Punathambekar's article provides insight into how and why music directors make their choice among playback singing possibilities. He mentions:

Their track record, their performance in the song under question, whether their voice "fits" the song, and the actor/actress in the film, and so on. Once the film is

released, discussion shifts to picturization of the song in the film and how the song works in relation to the overall narrative (2008: 287).

The narrative of the film is of foremost consideration to the music director as playback assignments are made. Another essay, by Arvind Rajagopal, reflects on the contributions of playback singers in creating a vocal legacy that affects audience reception of Bollywood film in both the past and the present. The playback singers create the rendition of the songs which in turn are that which 'most viewers identified with, often in extra-diegetic sequences whose ideological power lay more in their performance of a collective identity' (300).

I also have made use of articles found both in academic journals and in the popular press to learn more about playback in the Bollywood film industry. Jerry D'Souza's 1992 articles for *Billboard* magazine were useful in fleshing out my knowledge of this topic. After discussing the history of playback technology in Bollywood films, D'Souza notes, with Anantharanam and others, that in the past few decades there has been a shift in focus from the singer to the composer. D'Souza says, 'whereas audience taste once dictated the inclusion of Rafi, Lata, or Mukesh, composers could now choose the singer they wanted. This gave rise to a new crop of singers who faded as quickly as they appeared' (73). He quotes V. K. Dubey, a vice-president at the Gramophone Company of India who noted that indeed, the present circumstances in the Bollywood film industry indicate that there is no longer an 'emphasis on the singer. The voice of the actor [ie. the playback singer] is a person behind the scenes and is therefore unknown' (ibid.). From this comment, it can be deduced that the idea that the playback singer should be famous is fading.

The same idea was expressed by Hema Ramachandran in 2005, in her essay for *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. She discusses the voice that cannot be located,

referred to by Michel Chion as the acousmatic voice: 'we hear the voice but do not see the source from which it issues' (108) and suggests that the audience also do not *need* to see it, the identity of the voice being immaterial to the illusory story unfolding on the screen. Ramachandran discusses the Indian film's 'emphasis on the auditory' (103) and how the whole concept of playback and its mediation between star and audience finds its way into author Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, in which a film star takes on the persona of an angel, while the voice-over artist takes on the persona of a devil. Film stars, like angels, are sometimes glorified beyond all rationality, while voice-over artists (or playback singers) may be marginalized; yet in the end, the former (the so-called devil's voice in Rushdie's novel) may be the clearer of the two, bringing substantial value to a film.

Pavitra Sundar's 2008 article in *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* reviews much of the historical information about playback technology through to the present day. She discusses the connection between perception of voice and perception of the body that accompanies the voice, 'The bodily nature of voice—the fact that it, like skin color for instance, is "of the body"—even bestows on it a naturalness and authenticity that some other identity markers lack' (153) and yet with the use of playback, the body and voice do not always match. Sundar's article was particularly useful to me in gaining an understanding of Lata Mangeshkar's perceived monopoly of playback recording during her fifty-year career³⁹.

³⁹ As a novice Bollywood film watcher, after seeing only a half dozen films, I noticed that more than one heroine seemed to sing with the same voice. This was disconcerting, since I knew nothing about Lata Mangeshkar, whose voice I was hearing while seeing the face of Kajol, Aishwarya Rai or Gracy Singh.

2.5 Hollywood and Playback Technology

When I first began my research, it seemed that any information about the use of playback technology in the United States and the Hollywood film industry would be impossible to find. Given Hollywood's compunction to keep it all 'rather hush hush' (Wagner 1998), evidence of the use of dubbing artists, ghost singers, or voice doubles (as they are variously called) took some effort to uncover. I was mostly dependent on articles in magazines, journals, newspapers and on-line sources, with sometimes only one line of relevant information to provide the necessary evidence. As I tried to find someone who would talk to me about this, too, I found few who were open to having a discussion about it, and received several e-mails of brisk dismissal.

There were no books completely devoted to this topic that I could find, though I did discover a couple of books that were helpful. Joan Baker's 2005 book *Secrets of Voice-over Success: Top Voice-over Artists Reveal How They Did It*, although slightly off the topic because its emphasis was on the speaking voice rather than the singing voice, helped me to understand how a person would go about finding work using their voice alone in the Hollywood film industry. Some of the chapters did mention people for whom singing is a part of their work. Baker quotes voice-over expert Steve Zirnkilton, who poses the question, 'Having a great voice is nice, but it's only the beginning... if you have a great voice, it may sound nice, but can you play it?' (29). The dubbing artist, or playback singer, has to have the ability to act, since it is the character being represented whose interpretation of a song must be carried to the audience, rather than the singer's own personal take on the song.

For jingle singer Janice Pendarvis, Baker relates, learning to play a part with her voice has been very helpful in developing her skills as a singer. Pendarvis said, 'I get into the text of a song on a whole new level and have much more focus and intensity. There

is so much more depth to my singing performances now' (Baker 2005: 69). Stephen Newman, another voice-over artist, told Baker that whether he is speaking or singing his assignment in a film, what he needs the most is a 'widespread grounding in *music*. Something about meter and melody and phrasing seems to relate to telling a story' (ibid. 131) and the story being unfolded in the film is what is most important for the ghost recording artist to keep in mind. Throughout this book, the need for anonymity, as imposed by the hiring studio, was also emphasized⁴⁰.

Other books mentioned the use of lip-synchronization coupled with playback (or words to that effect) although the researcher would have to search in the contents to find the odd helpful allusion to the practice. One such book is Peter Leslie's *Fab, the Anatomy of a Phenomenon* (1965), which discusses what happened with sound technology as rock and roll groups like the Beatles make television appearances.

Looking at the convention of playback technology, Leslie states:

The absurdity of the whole convention is that it makes entertainment when a singer mimes to one of his own gramophone records—simply because the television people cannot reproduce the sound on the record, and the singer cannot sing it well while jiggling about—is not even noticed anymore (1965: 167).

His statement begs the question—if it is not noticed, then why is the Hollywood industry (whether television or film) always anxious to either mask or ignore the fact that playback technology is used regularly?—a question that several chapters in this study can help toward finding an answer to. Parker Tyler's *Magic and Myth of the Movies* (1971) discusses 'Hollywood's vocal charade' (54) occasioned by the separating of the singing voice from the acting face on the movie screen. Like Rick Altman, Tyler sees this separation as being 'ventriloquistic' with the voice being 'a musical instrument that may

⁴⁰ Anne Chisholm discusses SAG (Screen Actors Guild) contracts with doubles for both voice and body in her 2000 article in *Camera Obscura*. See Works Cited for full citation.

boldly state its independence from or superiority to its Hollywood job' (Tyler 1971: 222). When the 'visible personality' is separated from the 'vocal personality' (ibid. 221), the film that is the product of the process is 'illusion and not reality, art and not life' (ibid. 227).

Anyone who would insist that Hollywood films are so realistic that every singer is actually singing his own songs, would be swiftly disabused of that notion by reading *American Bandstand* host Dick Clark's *Rock, Roll & Remember* (1976). Clark spoke of the use of playback on his show, and stated unequivocally that 'every musical motion picture ever made has used the lip-sync technique. I explained the process to the kids and they learned to distinguish a good lip-syncer [sic] and a bad one. We used the lip-sync primarily because it was cheaper, but also because it was impossible to duplicate the sound of the record—and it was the record the kids wanted to hear' (Clark 1976:71). It is interesting to me, this Hollywood idea that use of playback must be hidden or the audience will be upset; but if the audience finds out, they are upset because they were being fooled, not because of playback per se. Yet the audience also demands of the film the same quality of sound available through a recording made under optimum circumstances in a recording studio. It is an interesting and unsolvable dichotomy—how can the industry do all of these things without subterfuge? In Clark's 1985 collaboration with Michael Shore, *The History of American Bandstand*, the authors relate an amusing story of a musician whose integrity forbade him from going along with the charade. Shore relates:

When Pink Floyd appeared on Bandstand, singer and guitarist Syd Barrett adamantly refused to move his lips to the playback of their two British hits; he just stood there, immobile, while the rest of the band sheepishly mimed along behind him (Shore 1985: 110).

Clearly, Barrett's actions made the audience of that episode aware that playback was being used; that an attempt was being made to fool them, and that the band could

clearly not replicate the album sounds in their current circumstance. Frankness about the need and use of technology to arrive at realistic film sound is called for, and Geoffrey M. Horn delivers it in *Movie Soundtracks and Special Effects* (2007). Horn unapologetically explains the use of playback recording in Hollywood films in the present time. There are many parts to the film's ultimate soundtrack, including background music, songs, speaking voices, and noises that are a natural part of life that need to be incorporated into the background to make it seem realistic. All of these are recorded separately. 'The sounds are put together, or mixed, after the film has been shot,' Horn explains (8).

It was suggested to me that researching the *Milli Vanilli* lip-synch scandal in the popular music world, and public attitude toward those events, might lead me to information about lip-synching in films as well. The scandal began in 1990, when the German-based pop group *Milli Vanilli* won the Grammy Award for Best New Artist. The reward was later revoked when it was revealed that Fab Morvan and Rob Pilatus were only visually marketable front men who lip-synched to vocals that were actually provided by the less photogenic trio made up of Charles Shaw, John Davis, and Brad Howell. This proved to be a fruitful, though painstaking, avenue of research, which led me eventually to a variety of sources, and much more information than I had originally thought I would be able to find. Along the way, I found other examples of lip-synching, whether in movies, on television or in stage shows, and was also able to find opinions of audience members about these 'questionable' practices—with acceptance varying from approval to ambivalent to scandalous ⁴¹.

⁴¹ Some, though not all, of these situations are discussed in chapters 4 and 6.

A *New York Times* article by Judith Newman opens by telling the story of an actor who went to the theatre to watch himself on film. She recounts, 'There he was on screen, but when his mouth opened, the voice that emerged belonged to some other actor.' While that moment was a great shock to this individual, who had not been informed of the switch, his rights were not being violated. Newman explains that 'the issue is whether celebrities have rights to their voices as well as their images.' According to Screen Actors' Guild rules, 'actors have the right to their own voice, and another voice can be substituted only with their permission'—but significantly: 'The rules don't apply, however, to actors earning less than \$475 per day, and this is where the bulk of voice doubling is done' (1992: 13). Newman's article states that looping⁴² is standard procedure in every film, used to fix small errors in sound that become noticeable as film editing is underway, but that 'dubbing is an artistic choice or a technical problem.' Newman quotes a certain Mr. Fedinate, an employee of a post-production company who says, 'It's the sort of thing producers like to keep hush-hush' (ibid.), though this does not explain why secrecy should be so important when dubbing is routine practice in the Hollywood film industry.

Vincent Canby, who was for many years the chief film critic for the *New York Times* stated in a 1995 article that 'it used to be that what you heard was what you saw. Sound was the shadow of a person or object from which it came. No more. The shadow has been amputated. Sound has a life of its own now' (Canby 1995: 1). Gary Giddins suggested in a *New York Times* column in 2004 that we, the spectators, need to accept that show business is just that—show business. We pay for a show, and film producers deliver a show, using whatever methods they need to be both cost-effective and

⁴² See Chapter 3 for a definition of this term.

successful in creating an appealing final product. 'We have been living in an increasingly lip-synced world for some 75 years, and we have yet to reach the bottom of a slippery slope,' (A21) Giddins says. The slippery slope he refers to includes much more interference from technology than is used to switch one voice for another. For example, Giddins notes that we live 'in a world of automatic pitch-shifters that can adjust off-key singing, and digital fixes that eliminate human error'—so perhaps, replacing voices is not so much of an issue, when we have the technology to correct any voice after the fact (ibid.). However, in Giddins view, the image becomes ever more distanced from reality as technology takes over mediating sound to greater degrees.

As I researched the use of playback technology in Hollywood film, I did not want to overlook the film *Singin' in the Rain*, the film which the general public most associate with the idea of voice doubling in Hollywood cinema. However, while people know that playback and lip synchronization played a major role in the plot of this film, they seem to think it is limited to the plot alone, and does not extend to the actual recording methods that were used.

In Peter Wollen's 1992 treatise on the film, also titled *Singin' in the Rain*, he states that 'dubbing is the cinematic form of writing through which sound is separated from its origin and becomes a free-floating, radically unstable semantic element' (56), and this facet of sound is certainly demonstrated in the film as voices are passed around from body to body. We see one girl singing for another, female voices coming from the mouths of men and vice versa. What the audience does not realize is that what is seen in this film, and therefore what they think they know about it, is not the same as what actually happened in the recording of the songs of this film—since many layers of dubbing were used. *Singin' in the Rain* was also a good starting point for locating journal articles about the use of doubling in Hollywood film. In Martin Roth's 1990 article in

Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media he discusses the role of Lina Lamont, who is 'exposed as a dummy' since her voice emanates not from inside her, but from elsewhere (59). Roth suggests that this film 'has as its structural message that the Hollywood voice lies' which also means that 'the Hollywood image lies' (61). But the lies are necessary to tell the story—and the story is an illusion, not reality.

Ruth D. Johnston's 2004 essay in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* also discussed *Singin' in the Rain*. Like Altman and Tyler, Johnston thinks of the separation of voice and body in terms of ventriloquism, with sometimes the image bearing more importance over voice, and sometimes 'voice over image' if the voice is recognizable (127). Ventriloquism is most successful, however, when the two are so balanced that the audience believes that the sound—the song—is really being produced by the image, and neither sound nor image is more important than the other. This is optimal synchronization. To achieve this, there must be no 'discordance between the visual and audio tracks' (126). The voice that can best aid the audience to believe that the illusion created by the image is real is the right voice for the job, regardless of the provenance of the voice. Johnston explains that *Singin' in the Rain* 'exposes the work involved in the construction of the soundtrack that is ordinarily effaced in sound film' (120). The work on the *Singin' in the Rain* soundtrack alluded to in this quotation will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

The articles about *Singin' in the Rain* would in turn lead me to journal article discussions of the few other musicals that openly admitted to using voice doubling, such as *The Student Prince* (1954), *Carmen Jones* (1954), and *Porgy and Bess* (1959). Examples include articles such as Jeff Smith's 2003 article in *The Velvet Light Trap*, which, although looking at these musicals from different perspectives, for example through the lens of race or gender, were still useful to me as evidence of the use of

playback technology in Hollywood musicals. Early on, Smith states that ‘the dubbing of an actor’s singing voice is not unusual in Hollywood films’ (29) and goes on to list possible reasons this is so, such as singing voices that do not record well, are not adequate for the demands of the song, or lacking in range, leading actors who are cast for their marketability or looks without due consideration for their voices, and so forth, although he admits that in some instances, voices have been substituted for no apparent reason. In *Carmen Jones*, this was the case—Smith is mystified by how some of the dubbing decisions were made in this film. The film’s star, Dorothy Dandridge, was cast for her looks but her voice was not used for the songs, though she could sing. Halle Berry, a non-singer, was cast for her looks to play the part of Dandridge in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* (1999). When scenes from *Carmen Jones* are used in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*:

The star of *Carmen Jones* is clearly shown to be lip-synching her performance rather than actually singing. The contemporary film thus acknowledges its technological sleight of hand in this scene while paradoxically concealing it in others ... the film establishes a strange double standard by acknowledging the technology used to construct Dandridge’s star persona as Carmen Jones but concealing the use of the very same technology to make it appear that Halle Berry is, in face, a talented jazz vocalist (41).

Hollywood’s secretive approach to voice doubling is apparently very different from Bollywood’s straightforward admission that doubling is a routine practice in the Indian film industry.

Bob Allen’s 1996 article in *The Association of Motion Picture Sound Newsletter* discusses the first use of voice doubling in the first Hollywood ‘talkie,’ *The Jazz Singer*, before playback technology was available, but still related to the concept of using aural illusion to create filmic reality. But Allen traces the use of playback to as early as 1926, when it was used to bring the orchestra sound to a scene in *Don Juan* (2008). Hollywood technicians were using all possible methods they knew of or could invent to bring as

much realism as possible to film as they worked to meld voice and image. How effective and honest the results on film would be has always been a concern.

George Lewis referred to this as long ago as 1931 in the article that he wrote for the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*. Already at that date, concerns were raised that audiences would see post-synchronization as a technology that would interfere with how “real” a film seemed to be. Lewis felt to reassure readers that use of the process would not necessarily mean that one “fake” voice was being substituted for another “real” voice; he wished to inform them that ‘the industry does not condone a mismatching of voice and bodies’ (Lewis 1931:48). However, the replacement of voices became common practice, regardless of statements by industry insiders to the contrary.

I was able to find journal articles which addressed the need for operatic quality voices to be used in Hollywood film productions, for film titles such as *The Student Prince* (1954), *Carmen Jones* (1954), and *Porgy and Bess* (1959) and others. Hans Keller wrote on this topic in 1955 in an article that appeared in *The Musical Times*. He expressed his dislike for the use of dubbing in this way, explaining:

For the musician, who cannot listen and watch without muscular empathy, the result is intolerable. It is not only that the movements of the actor’s mouths do not always precisely coincide with the invisible singers’ sounds, but even when they do, it is impossible to feel that these people on the screen are singing: apart from the articulation of the words, their mouths and throats have nothing in common with the physical source of the song (549).

He notes how the producers make up for these kinds of deficiencies in realism by cutting the shot away from the singer, focusing on objects, and making use of all the illusion-making possibilities that the camera can produce so that the viewer’s focus is not on the actor who is pretending to sing. Harper MacKay also addressed this topic in his 1994 essay in *Opera News*, but disagrees with Keller’s assessment of the situation. He points out that:

If the actor were lip-synching to someone else's recorded track, he actually had to sing—not just pretend to—so movements of his face and throat would show he was producing sound. He had to memorize the nuts and bolts of the recording: phrasing, breathing, duration of held notes. Some actors proved good at this; others who were not usually shied away from musical roles (17).

MacKay felt that the use of playback was a good thing for musical films, especially when opera singing was called for, since its use would mean that there would be no reason for a film to have inferior singing that would detract from the story being unfolded. He felt that the technology helped to sustain the illusion of reality rather than hinder it.

Martha Siefert, a communications professor, looked at the issue of song doubling from an angle appropriate for her discipline in her 1995 article which appeared in the *Journal of Communication*. Her idea is that 'dubbing might serve as a synecdoche⁴³ for the relation of image and sound practices, since its goal is to erase the effects of the technologies process and to rejoin in art what presumably has been joined in nature' (44-45). She further suggests that the illusion produced, which is that the voice belongs to and has as its source the image that is seen on the screen 'requires a further assumption of an image's natural authority. Therefore, the success or believability of dubbing one voice for another's screen image depends upon this projection of the organic unity of the body and the voice in sound film' (26).

Both Douglas Gomery (1980) and Nataša Ďurovičová (2003) were most interested in how Hollywood's use of singing doubles affected the film industries of other nations, and perhaps in the hypocrisy of promoting doubling abroad while simultaneously rejecting any efforts to make foreign films available in dubbed versions for American audiences. Ďurovičová reminds us also that 'what a near-perfectly lip-synchronized soundtrack hopes we will forget ... is that sound film itself is based on an

⁴³ A figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole or the whole for a part, the special for the general or the general for the special. See: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/synecdoche>.

ontological non-identity: mixed medium of light and sound waves' (2). Therefore, film itself is so far removed from reality that use of voice doubles and playback—whatever technology is used to make the sound as realistic as possible—is not going to change the fact that film is not real; that it is a medium used to bring an illusion to as close to lifelike as possible, but is still an illusion.

Another interesting take on doubling is that of Anne Chisholm, writing in 2000 for *Camera Obscura*. Chisholm's research interest is body doubles used in film—those people whose hands, legs, feet, or buttocks are used in film in lieu of the body parts of the actors and actresses whose faces are seen by the audience. She writes about the history of contractual relationships between Hollywood studios and their hired doubles of any ilk. There is much information here applicable to the working 'playback singer' in Hollywood, whose presence in song sequences is probably much more common than we think. Just like voice doubles, body doubles were 'asked to sign contracts agreeing not to reveal their part in the production of cinematic illusion' (2000: 124). Like voice doubles, body doubles in Hollywood have historically been paid for their work and then sent on their way with no residual income and no credit, and sometimes treated with at best dismissal and at worst contempt (ibid. 127). Yet all kinds of doubles 'enhance and guarantee the value' of a film since what they contribute adds to the artist's 'overall film performance' (making that their contribution look or sound better) and because they are paid less than lead performers, doubles of all kinds work to the financial good of the film (132-133). I am indebted to Chisholm for her deep research into contracts for doubles that helped me to understand how their work fits into the Hollywood film industry.

More playback and lip-synchronization information could also be found in magazines that are a part of the popular press. Probably in response to the Milli Vanilli

debacle, David Handelman wrote for *Rolling Stone* in 1990 about the use of these technologies in live shows and even on Broadway and suggests that audiences are not as opposed to mediation by technology as some purists might suppose⁴⁴. Handelman reports that while recorded playback is not allowed in Broadway performances, off-stage replacement voices have been a part of the picture for decades. ‘The show *Cats*, for example, employs four vocalists who sit in the orchestra pit, watch a TV monitor and sing along; they are credited in the program as Cats Chorus’ (1990: 16). Perhaps Charles Isherwood should have read this article before writing his 2004 piece for *Variety*, in which he contended that a Bollywood-derived musical such as *Bombay Dreams* was the first to introduce this questionable practice to a Broadway show. His tone is contemptuous when he relates that ‘“Shakalaka Baby”, the show’s big production number from act one, replete with the dancing fountains that are a Bollywood staple, is entirely lip-synched’ (72).

Many other articles in the popular press of 2004 treated the topic of playback, dubbing and audience reaction to live-ness versus ‘canned’ sound: Scott Foundas writing a film review for *Variety* felt it important to note that ‘in a rare and demanding move, all singing was performed and recorded live on the set, eschewing the post-synchronization common to the format’ (2004: 41). The fact that he found this noteworthy emphasizes how ubiquitous and rooted the practice is in Hollywood, despite scores of people in film audiences who are completely oblivious to it.

In a similar vein, in the short article Brian D. Johnson wrote for *Maclean’s* in 2007, he found it unusual enough that the makers of the film *Once* used no playback at all for the song sequences, that his amazement is felt as he states, ‘Every musical

⁴⁴ Handelman draws this conclusion despite the ferocity of the Milli Vanilli scandal of the same time period.

performance in the film was shot and recorded live, without lip-synching or overdubs.” (Johnson 2007: 58). David Rooney and Jonathan Bing wrote the front page story for *Weekly Variety* in March of 2003 with the headline ‘Can Hollywood Carry a Tune?’ clearly indicating that something is going on behind the scenes with technology that begs that question. They interviewed film producer Christine Vachon, who has much experience with ‘bringing a tuner⁴⁵ to the screen’. Vachon likes to have actors sing live on the set, using the film crew as an audience, but these sessions of live-ness still mean that the actor is singing to playback. Vachon states, “There’s something so exhilarating about doing a song live. The energy that goes into lip-synching a knockout track can really galvanize people on a shoot’ (Rooney 2003: 1).

Steve Knopper, writing in *Rolling Stone*, noted that live shows make use of backing tracks and lip-synchronization with great frequency. He interviewed Evanescence manager Dennis Rider, who said, ‘When you go into the recording studio you have layers and layers of guitars. Unless you have three or four guitar players on stage, you can’t duplicate that. And people want to hear the record they bought’ (2004: 20). He gleaned similar comments from people who manage singing acts—the audience wants to hear the record “live” but they want to be entertained, to see a performance. Given how mediated a recording is, it is simply impossible to give that to an audience in a “live” performance.

Some unexpected sources for information about playback technology and lip-synching in the Hollywood film industry, and on Broadway, were dance magazines. Frank W. D. Ries, writing in 1988 for *Dance Chronicle*, outlines the career of dancer Sammy Lee, and by so doing also offers historical information about Douglas Shearer

⁴⁵ Device to artificially fix the sound when the performer is out of tune.

introducing the idea of playback technology to Hollywood, with insightful comments about its use there, and notes that as well as playback's ability to enhance sound, free technology and save studios money, it was also a 'boon to the costume designer' since costumes could be designed 'without worrying about the sound of the costumes' (145). Several articles in *Dance Spirit Magazine* discuss that it is important for professional dancers to learn how to lip-synch in order to be considered for parts that require singing and dancing, so they can lip-synch convincingly to prerecorded vocal tracks provided by professional singers, which is just another way of saying 'playback' singers. For example, Melissa Hathway (2001) shares advice from Disney theme park choreographers, who advise dancers to 'keep your mouth open to make sure you really enunciate the words. Mouth the true words to the song, not fake ones. Learn the choreography and the words at the same time. Practice, practice, practice [sic] until the words and choreography are in your system' (65).

Caitlin Sims notes that 'when emotions get too intense for words, characters break into song' and that the dancer needs to be able to show the emotion on the face, which effective lip-synching will help the dancer to do (2005: 136). These articles helped me to understand the importance of any performer being able to lip-synch to a prerecorded track in order to help a film to achieve synchronicity⁴⁶, and therefore to be accepted as plausible reality by viewers.

Film reviews were also good places to find out about the possibility of the use of playback technology in films. Derek Elley's 2004 article on *The Phantom of the Opera* in *Variety*, Marsha Kinder's 2002 review of *Moulin Rouge* in *Film Quarterly*, and Terri Roberts' 2007 article about *Sweeney Todd* in *The Sondheim Review* were all sources that

⁴⁶ This term refers to two events that are experienced as occurring simultaneously. In film, it is often used to refer to seeing an on-screen mouth at the same time as the sound issuing from the moving mouth is heard.

served to confirm for me the use of playback technology in Hollywood movies. I also turned to the internet as a source of information, and found short articles online that helped me to further understand this topic. Articles appeared in places like about.com, broadway.com, on ESPN, the BBC news online version, MTV movie news, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), online newspapers like the *St. Joe News* and the *Guardian* online all are places where current information about this topic can be found. A very interesting source that was located online was Laura Wagner's extensive study of dubbing on *classicalimages.com*, in which she details the pervasive use of the dubbing practice in Hollywood, even in the face of its denial that such practices were not a part of their business model. Wagner concludes that, though 'every effort is made on the part of producers to guard the secret of doubling' because 'picture-makers feel that it spoils the illusion, that it hurts a production's box-office appeal' it is 'likely vocal dubbing will continue on film for a long time to come' since the benefits are just too great (Wagner 1998).

2.6 Bollywood Audience Response to Playback Technology

All of the articles about playback technology in the United States make some sort of mention of audience response, or at least make allusions to it, whether stating that it is something that the audience appreciates or doesn't, notices or doesn't, with all manner of opinions about it. This information was harder to find for Bollywood, probably because playback is transparent in India and so is just accepted; it doesn't always bear mentioning. Therefore, I had to specifically look for information about this to aid in my understanding of the differences between the acceptance of this technological interference in film music in Bollywood and Hollywood.

Much of this information could be gleaned from books. Film critic Kobita Sarkar's *Indian Cinema Today: An Analysis* (1975) was helpful in understanding the attitudes of

the Indian audience as they have shifted through the years since *Alam Ara* (1931). At first, the Indian audience was enraptured by sound film and the singing actors seen onscreen. When playback singing became the trend, initial resistance to the change was followed by willingness to accept and finally to adore the voices that rendered the songs that were a part of Bollywood cinema. But recently, as the audience has become more sophisticated, their acceptance is not always a guarantee. As author Kobita Sarkar says:

How a village yokel and a sophisticated city slicker have identical voices [using the same playback singer in different films], and how they voice the same type of complex sentiments is the sort of absurdity in the Indian film which stretches willing suspension of disbelief to breaking point (105).

Satyajit Ray, a Bengali filmmaker, echoes Sarkar's comments, as he attempts to understand the Indian audience point of view and compare it with the western audience point of view in his *Our Films, Their Films* (1976). He too felt that the typical Indian audience had become more aware of a disjuncture between the singing voice or playback and the speaking voice and said 'to one not familiar with the practice [i.e. of playback] the change of timbre comes as a jolt' (74). However, he felt that to at least part of the Indian audience, the jolt would not be because there was playback, but rather 'if they did not recognize one of their six favorites in the playback' (ibid.) so inured had they become both to playback and to the monopoly of a few voices that was the norm during Bollywood's golden age.

Derek Bose is an author and journalist who specializes in writing about Bollywood. His *Bollywood Unplugged: Deconstructing Cinema in Black and White* (2004) provided more information on the topic of audience response to playback in Bollywood films. His opinion is that use of playback singers is effective because 'sound is always second to visuals' (20) unless the script specifically calls for the opposite, therefore the audience is willing to accept the truth of what they see and not to question its associated sound—as long as the film is lip-synchronous. 'A film is most true-to-life

when the voices of screen characters are synchronized with their lip movements, because the scene is bound to real time' (72), Bose maintains.

Indian journalists and magazine editors Dinesh Raheja and Jitendra Kothari published *Indian Cinema: The Bollywood Saga* in 2004, which looks at reaction to Bollywood practices by international audiences. While they note that the Bollywood 'obsession with musicals'—or at least the inclusion of song and dance in almost every film produced by Bollywood studios—has 'occasionally put our cinema up for ridicule but it also gave it an identity that is absolutely unique' (25). They note that the work of 'talented songwriters, musicians and playback singers' is heard all over the world, and feel that these people are justified in having a star status equivalent to or similar to that enjoyed by acting stars because the songs become so popular both inside and outside of films. Throughout the world, 'their music is sampled or remixed for marketing in the dance clubs of Europe and America' which is 'indicative of the new international appeal of the Bollywood style' (11).

Journal articles were also helpful in learning about audience reaction to playback singing. Ann R. David records in the journal *South Asia Research* (2007) that Bollywood's 'song and dance numbers are now more commonly recorded separately from the rest of the film, using professional "playback" singers' and notes that film producers expend a large proportion of the total financial commitment to a film on the creation of these segments. She continues, 'some producers spend at least forty percent of their total budget on recording the songs and dances and an average of 33,000 pounds per song (in British currency) is not uncommon' (10). Producers are willing to make this investment in song sequences because the audiences both appreciate and expect them. They are an important marketing tool and a box office draw.

Sheila Nayar's assessment of audience reaction to playback and the use of song in Bollywood films in her article in the *Journal of Popular Culture* are interesting. Nayar, a former screenwriter and current college English and communications professor, notes that 'Hindi popular cinema's intention was always to appeal broadly across the subcontinent' in a nation that has been 'ceaselessly struggling to keep its commercial, regional and linguistic factions from splintering,' an assessment of the situation that I can agree with. Bollywood film producers have used song and dance sequences to leverage broad appeal across linguistic groups in the subcontinent. Nayar also asserts that to combat divisiveness, 'Bollywood came to rely, ironically, on the uniformity of the West (or rather, what it *chose* from the West) to provide its films with a generic coat of all-Indianness' (1997: 75). I am not sure that I completely agree with her assessment, but to argue this point would go beyond the scope of my own research, which focuses only on film singers and film songs, and not the larger milieu of film content. Suffice it to say that Nayar acknowledges the ubiquitousness of song and dance to cinema in India, for, as Lewis Rowell notes in his contribution to volume 5 of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, 'the essence of Indian music is vocal sound' (2000: 19) and the word used to describe it, *sangita*, involves melody, instrumental music and movement (ibid. 20), all three of which are put to use in Bollywood song sequences.

2.7 Bollywood and Hollywood Compared

While going through the literature review process, I have been constantly looking for information that offers comparisons and contrasts between Bollywood and Hollywood, whether it be comparing the singers, the use of playback, the statistical information about them, and including attitudes toward the finished products, particularly those films that involve singing and/or song sequences. Many of the sources that have been referred to earlier in this chapter have had helpful information

in this regard as well. For example, the book *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance* (2008) which has been cited several times in the preceding paragraphs, also has helpful essays useful in this part of my research: Shanti Kumar of Indiana University's Department of Radio-Television-Film contributes an essay that looks at the economics of film song production and makes comparisons between economic choices and constraints in Bollywood and Hollywood. He notes that as of 2001, much of Hollywood's funding came from Germany, but that most funding will come from Asia by 2010. Kumar reminds us that 80% of the world's population resides in Japan, China and India, all of which have substantial percentages of people below the age of thirty (60% of the population in India) and that their tastes will likely drive film production choices, given the size of their market group (Kumar 2008: 94). Already, Kumar notes, 'the world's biggest film studio, Ramoji Film City, is indeed now in India' (ibid. 95) so we may see that film production in India continues to grow and have an increasing influence in the world.

There were useful articles in another source cited earlier, *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music* (2001). Corey K. Creekmur gives insightful comments such as this:

I think that the confusion surrounding the proper terms for comparing virtually all Hindi films with a single waning genre of the classical Hollywood cinema misrepresents the larger extent to which the song-dominated Hindi cinema as a whole resembles the increasingly song-dominated American cinema as a whole that has developed through the compilation soundtrack (390).

He believes that Hollywood is copying what Bollywood does with singing, and not the other way around, with American producers paying close attention to a film's soundtrack in ways that Bollywood producers have done for decades⁴⁷. Another essay in this volume, by Neepa Majumder, compares Bollywood to itself decade by decade and

⁴⁷ The ABBA movie, for example, being a good exemplar of this.

ponders the question of 'the morality of vocal substitution' (168) in both Bollywood and Hollywood. *Yale French Studies no.60 Cinema/Sound*, published in 1980, offers another essay, this one by Dudley Andrew, which looks at Hollywood's 'drive to control world cinema' (95) and the cultural imperialism that occurred early on. That the desire for world domination was a Hollywood goal is hard to argue with, since the March 1930 issue of *Film Mercury* included the following statement: 'What European producer will vie with us when we have captured their greatest actors with our money?' (Andrew 1980: 96). The technology of the American sound system was a big part of the problem, putting foreign film directors 'at the mercy' of Hollywood trained soundmen (ibid. 105), because Hollywood would share their men, but would not share their technology. These practices impacted foreign markets, including that of Bollywood.

Jane Feuer, professor of film studies at the University of Pittsburgh, in her 1993 book *The Hollywood Musical* has given me useful information in setting up an understanding of the parameters of songs in Hollywood films so as to make better comparisons to songs in Bollywood films. Feuer herself notes a difference between the two, by saying that Hollywood 'not only showed you singing and dancing, they were about singing and dancing' because the musicals of Hollywood's golden age were usually about Hollywood, or Broadway, or the entertainment industry. She continues, 'In contrast, Bollywood films use singing and dancing to show you the story' (1993: x).

Some people think the song and dance sequences in Bollywood films are gratuitous, but I agree with Feuer that Bollywood producers really are making an effort to advance the plot through the use of songs. A scholar at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom, Susan Hayward, shares Feuer's opinion as well. In her book *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (2000), Hayward says, 'musicals are theorized as "quintessentially American genres"' (235) but one can argue that Hollywood musicals

are hampered by simplistic plots which are ‘a vehicle for song-and-dance performers that, unlike Hindi movies, do nothing for the narrative’ (242). Since Bollywood song sequences generally advance the story, they are an essential part of the illusion being created by the film.

Journal articles were also useful in researching similarities and differences between Bollywood and Hollywood. In a 1980 article in the *India International Center Quarterly* aptly titled “The Use of Music in Popular Film: East vs. West,” William O’Beeman writes about vocal expression in India as compared to the west, and makes inferences about audience reception because of these differences. He suggests that vocal expression in India is more varied, whether it is speech, poetic recitation or song, ‘with the result that for the spectator the distance between registers of utterance—speech/song—is narrower than in the west’ (82-83), making the usual Bollywood audience more discriminatory than their Hollywood counterparts.

Amy Fung writes in the *London Journal of Canadian Studies* (2006) about the attitudes of youth to Bollywood films, especially their desire to ‘emulate the songs and dances’ used by film characters as a mode of expression (72). Fung believes that ‘the force of the Bollywood industry far surpasses Hollywood in both production and consumption... Bollywood is undeniably the world leader in film production’ (ibid.).

Dr. Faiza Hirji of Canada’s McMaster University contributed an article to the online *Global Media Journal* in which she compares Bollywood and Hollywood films. She sees the song and dance sequences typical of Bollywood film being used as ‘natural expressions of emotions and situations emerging from everyday life’ (2005: 12) whereas in Hollywood musicals, such sequences are usually seen as quite the opposite, as affectations or something that would *not* occur in everyday life. This difference in perception, Hirji explains, may be a possible reason both for the ‘rise of Indian cinema’s

popularity and the failure of western cinema to secure the Indian market' (ibid.).

Although there has been criticism of Bollywood for incorporating Western rhythms into film scores, Dr. Hirji states that this use does not 'obliterate this music's unique sounds, derived at least in part from folk traditions' (ibid.).

Another *Global Media Journal* writer, Kuldip R. Rampal, who writes frequently about international mass media, expresses the concern that despite India's movie industry being the 'largest in the world' (2005: 3), its culture, like others in the world 'is facing subversion from the mass-produced outpourings of commercial broadcast in the U.S.' (ibid.). He articulates concerns that he shares with Bollywood producers and directors, that young viewers are asking for idols like Michael Jackson, Tom Cruise, Jackie Chan, and their ilk, but that will 'still croon to their beloved in Swiss meadows, and deliver rhetorical dialogue with panache! It is like having your Indian cake and licking the forbidden Western icing too' to put it in words that Rampal quotes from Bollywood producer Rashika Singh (ibid. 4). These fears are very real and shared across the board by those responsible for much of what is produced in Bollywood. Many of those in the industry are worried about protecting and encouraging the continued use of the song and dance sequence (which convention is frequently maligned in the west) in film produced for the Hindi language market. For example, Aamir Khan, who acts, directs and produces prolifically and is a top box-office drawing card in India felt to give a 'warning that a wholesale rejection of song and dance might kill the colour, fire and innocence' that defines Indian cinema (ibid. 8).

In a 2002 *Time* magazine article, Richard Corliss encourages Americans to 'see if this cinematic curry is to their taste' (53) and then compares the number of films produced in Bollywood as opposed to Hollywood, and the way that music is used in them. Corliss quotes an Indian writer resident in New York, Suketu Mehta, whose

explanation of Bollywood film is that ‘the formula is essentially a family epic. A family that breaks apart and then comes together’ and Corliss makes the corollary to the partition of India and Pakistan ‘but with vagrant, fragrant hope of union within diversity’ (52). Corliss applauds the fact that in Bollywood film, even ‘in the midst of the starkest plot twists, everyone sings and dances’ which is rather different from Hollywood film, where stark plots would never share the same moment on screen with singing and dancing (ibid. 53).

Erik Davis’ 1991 article for *The Village Voice*, which calls Indian film music ‘a strange, seductive brew’ (36) offers an outsider look at playback. Though he personally finds Bollywood films odd, he has positive remarks to make about film song, calling them ‘delirious rides between the familiar and the strange, as a single song will tease its way from girl-group bubblegum to folky melancholy to nursery rhymes to modal sitar evocations’ (75). He also seems to have a favourable attitude to playback singers, who he says ‘glow like Madonna and reign like Sinatra (and churn it out like Elvis)’ (ibid.). He compares playback singers favourably to the group of people in western culture that he sees as being closest in similarity to them—MTV stars—but sees them as being ‘visionary, unpretentious precursors’ of the stars that can be seen lip-synching on MTV (ibid. 78). Davis is among westerners who are willing to admit that we borrow freely from the cultures of others—some of the time, western journalists look at borrowing in the opposite direction.

This is the subject of Jim Bessman’s piece in *Billboard*, in which he discusses the use of the Roy Orbison hit song “Pretty Woman” in the Bollywood film *Kal Ho Naa Ho*. Bessman notes that this particular borrowed piece of American culture keeps the ‘basic essence’ of the song, but is well-received in India as well (2003: 64).

Newsweek carried an article by Ginny Power and Sudip Mazumdar (2000) that poses the question, 'will Bollywood be swamped by Hollywood and its alluring big bucks?' (52). They note that, though Hollywood has more money to spend and earns more money annually as compared to Bollywood, that Bollywood film is also making a global impact. They cite the popularity of Hindi language cinema in far-flung places: Romany gypsies in Eastern Europe, fans in Fiji and the Philippines, Israel, Arab countries, Tanzania and Zanzibar are all mentioned as places where audience box-office dollars indicate a preference for the output of Bollywood. Power and Mazumdar note that in the United States and Great Britain, 55% of ticket sales for internationally produced movies are for Bollywood films.

Within the continental United States, there are Bollywood film showings or even theatres devoted to only Bollywood films in many urban centers. In the state of Florida alone, sixteen Bollywood film theatres have been established in seven cities. Samara Biswas of Fort Lauderdale was asked about her family's film attendance practices and she said, 'We go to the movies to keep our culture alive' (ibid.). While it is possible that expatriate Americans living in India feel the same way, Hollywood has failed to make significant inroads into the film market of India, where instead the Hindi language films of Bollywood compete with other native film industries, such as those of the Tamil, Telugu or Bengali language groups.

The Washington Post presented an article by Alona Wartofsky (2002) looking at the expansion of the Bollywood song and dance genre into theatres in the United States. Wartofsky claimed that if most Americans are not aware of Bollywood, it is because 'we are self-absorbed' (C01). Wartofsky interviewed audience members about the convention of lip-synching in film songs. One student attendee, knowing that performers do not actually sing, was prepared to be disappointed, but came away from

the experience favourably impressed. An Indian national who lives in Virginia and promotes Bollywood stars in live concerts for a living, Vijay Taneja, expressed to Wartofsky his desire to keep Indian culture alive, a concept which seems to be always on the minds of people who move to the great melting pot that is the United States with its ubiquitous popular culture. The desire to protect culture does not seem to exist in the opposite direction—there is no concern that Bollywood film will take over and make American children forget their identity. That is probably because, as expressed by Bollywood film director Krutin Patel to *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Jon Matsumoto, ‘Non-Indian audiences may not fully understand a few of the cultural subtleties’ found in Bollywood cinema and therefore do not empathize with the characters (Matsumoto 2001: F10)—it remains foreign film to them.

The *San Jose Mercury’s* reporter Lisa Tsering wrote on a similar topic, describing how though she liked what she saw in a Bollywood film, it was definitely ‘other’ to her. She called Bollywood ‘a masala mix of Bombay and Hollywood, just as the films are a spicy blend of melodrama, romance, fights, patriotism, and gorgeously choreographed musical numbers... lip-synched by actors’ (1). She notes that, while Bollywood film has been slowly making itself known in her native state of California, throughout the world, fans in Russia, China, Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel and Britain are aficionados of Bollywood cinema.

While searching for information on the internet, I was delighted to come across the doctoral dissertation of James P. Kvetko (2005), *Indipop: Producing Global Sounds and Local Meanings in Bombay*, which focuses on popular music in India. Because of the popularity of film song, he includes a chapter about Bollywood film music in which some comparisons to Hollywood are made. Hollywood is often patently American, and that can be a source of disfavour to some of the international audience. Yet the

Bollywood film industry is making an effort to be patently Indian. However, since India is much more linguistically diverse than the United States is, that means that:

[A] critical element of the Bollywood code, then, is to appeal to as broad a demographic as possible. Yet in attempting to be all things to all people, Hindi films are routinely criticized for failing to reflect reality and presenting little more than stereotypes and formulae (105).

Kvetko also notes that patriotism is often the subject of Bollywood film offerings (107), which echoes efforts of Hollywood film, especially the musical films of the golden age, during and after the Second World War. Other online sources I consulted included an article titled 'Bollywood Ending' with no author given, which appears on the website of *Sight and Sound*, a publication of the British Film Institute. This article presents historical information and makes comparisons between Bollywood and Hollywood which I have summarized on the following chart, using US dollars:

| | Bollywood | Hollywood |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| First short film | 1899 | 1910 |
| Films per year | Up to 1000 | Up to 500 |
| Audience | 3.6 billion | 2.6 billion |
| Revenue | 1.75 billion (2006) | 9.68 billion (2009) |
| Percentage of revenue from foreign markets | 20% | 50% |
| Cost of film production (average) | 5 million | 60 million |

The figures on the chart indicate that while Hollywood is the dollar leader of the two film industries, Bollywood is the audience leader. Already Hollywood garners a significant percentage of its income from foreign markets. But most of Bollywood's revenues are domestic in origin, so Bollywood has room to grow outside of its borders.

2.8 Lata Mangeshkar

Something difficult for a non-Indian, newcomer to Bollywood, to understand is the way in which the voices of just a few playback singers monopolized the playback industry in Bollywood for a long time. In order to understand this phenomenon better, Chapter Five focuses on a woman who is among the most easily recognizable and most frequently recorded voices in India, Lata Mangeshkar, whose career began in 1942 and has lasted an astounding six and a half decades, five of which found her songs almost continually at the top of the popularity charts. Two biographies about the life of Lata Mangeshkar were published in 1995, one by Raju Bharatan, a journalist, and another by Harish Bhimani, a popular Indian voice-over artist who also has written several books. I will quote from and extrapolate from the writings of both of these biographers in this chapter.

In addition, I have used a variety of articles to learn about her life and work. Partha Chatterjee's article on the song and dance sequences of Bollywood characterises her as the 'richest and most popular playback singer in the history of Indian films and also an extremely influential figure within the Bombay film industry' (1995: 57). Jerry D'Souza has written articles (1992) that cover Lata's early career when at first she 'created an impact because of her range' through her maturation as a singer with the 'ability to craft feeling into every nuance' of a song, and follow her through to the new millennium, by which time she had been recognized as an 'internationally renowned singer' (1992: 73).

Indian university professor and writer Gadgil Gangadhar believes he speaks for all of India when he writes that 'Lata Mangeshkar is not so much a person as a voice—a voice that soars high and casts a magic spell over the hearts of millions of Indians from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari' (1967: 36). His article in *Illustrated Weekly of India* has

an adoring tone to it, which is quite common in writings about the goddess-like Lata, and gives an interesting if one-sided look into her life and the adulation that fans have given to her.

Pavitra Sundar's article reports that Indian music director Naushad told Lata that 'the very heart of India throbs in your voice' (2008: 44) but Sundar does not treat the life and work of Lata with the same bias apparent in Gangadhar's article, tending instead to take a more balanced approach. Photographer and journalist Gautum Rajadhyaksha met Lata and her sisters and brother for a short interview and photo-shoot for *Viva Goa: Goa's First Lifestyle Magazine* in 2010. His article, written as Lata's hold over the Bollywood film industry has finally diminished due to her advancing years, was useful to me for the less rose-colored approach, as he made the Mangeshkar family seem more normal and less icon-like. I have been grateful for all the authors who have written articles that have added to my understanding of the so-called 'Nightingale of India' (Landon-Smith 1998).

2.9 Marni Nixon

If one hopes to find a Hollywood voice double with anything even approaching the fame of Bollywood's Lata Mangeshkar one will hope in vain, for such a person does not exist, for reasons I have explained above. There is one Hollywood voice double whose name crops up more frequently than others, however, and that is Marni Nixon, whose life and work also merits a chapter in this dissertation, Chapter Six. While Marni Nixon is probably the most 'famous' voice double in the United States, her celebrity is not in any way comparable to the fame of Lata Mangeshkar. Lata's fame was so great that it has outlived the fame of many of the actresses she gave voice to; Nixon's fame is probably limited to that group of the public who avidly follow the careers of singers in Broadway or Hollywood musicals. There is only one autobiographical book devoted to

the life of Marni Nixon, which was written by Nixon and Stephen Cole in 2006, and which I have used extensively. After reading the book, I approached Miss Nixon's agent in hopes that I would be able to interview her personally. After many e-mails back and forth between Marni and me, we were finally able to have a long and satisfying telephone conversation on March 5, 2010, and have been able to maintain a casual friendship since that time. The 2010 telephone interview also figures strongly in the chapter about her life.

Several articles mention Miss Nixon, though perhaps not as many as I had hoped. I am indebted to William R. Braun, whose article in *Opera News* (2004) was the first thing I ever read about Marni Nixon. Marni had described herself to Braun as a young woman just starting out as a singer, calling herself 'Miss Energy', and describing herself as a 'young pipsqueak who had perfect pitch and could sing anything, the high Fs wouldn't quit, and Stravinsky's favorite singer' (30)⁴⁸. The tone and warmth with which Braun described Nixon made her seem like a person worth knowing more about. Because there has been comparatively little written about Nixon's career as a ghost singer in Hollywood, I spent a great deal of time scouring the newspapers and popular press magazines of past decades for information about her work in Hollywood. In Chapter Six there are many references to articles in the *Los Angeles Times* by well-known journalists of yesteryear like Hedda Hopper and Edwin Schallert; and to articles in the *New York Times* by film and theatre critic Philip K. Scheuer; as well as to articles in a variety of regional newspapers that make mention of Miss Nixon or the women whose singing voices she provided.

⁴⁸ Stravinsky esteemed Marni Nixon's voice sufficiently to choose her as the soprano in the premiere of his *Cantata* on 11 November 1952. He appreciated the 'mediaeval character' of her 'boy-soprano type voice'. See Hickman (1952:16).

2.10 Illusion and Reality

Every film is an illusion, a creation of an alternate reality. The question of how real the sound needs to be to support the illusion being created by the film is of definite interest to me in my research for this dissertation. I wanted to know how attitudes about singing actors as opposed to playback singers/voice doubles have changed over time, so I looked for some early sources. I found an article by W. A. Pozner in the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineering* (1946) which sets forth that 'one of the basic goals of the motion picture industry is to make the screen look alive in the eyes of the audience' (191), and synching sound with image is one way that the appearance of reality is accomplished. David Forrest's 1946 article in *Hollywood Quarterly* addresses the effect of technology and the editing process on the visual and aural illusion being created by the film. Forrest explains how 'each reel of picture, then, engenders many accompanying reels of sound, which are cut, edited, perfected, and rehearsed in the new and sacred temple of our art, the Dupe Room' (224). Hanns Eisler's 1947 book, *Composing for the Film*, discusses the composer's role in the creation of illusion, or you could say, of an alternate reality within the film through song and background music.

The *Yale French Studies no.60 Cinema/Sound* of 1980, which I have already referred to earlier in this chapter, has been of worth also in this area of my research. David Bordwell's essay speaks to the way in which song elements help to fulfill the drama of a film; how it helps to drive the illusion as 'music complements, completes and fulfills the drama in a continuous temporal process' (144). Nick Browne discusses the hierarchy of elements (aural elements included) within a film that create the artificial reality that drives the story being told. He explains that 'the film's use of sound establishes a narrative framework. The performance of the voice, neutralizing to some extent the convention of the past tense and establishing a hierarchy of presence,

determines a place for the action' (Browne 1980: 238). Claudia Gorbman's essay looks all the way back to the use of music and song in silent film, and how it has been brought forward into the present, and applied in 'temporal, spatial, dramatic, structural, denotative and connotative ways' (196) to the illusion created by the film. Gorbman's belief, as quoted by Debra White-Stanley, is that:

[F]ilm music removes barriers to belief; it bonds spectator to spectacle, it envelopes spectator and spectacle in a harmonious space. Like hypnosis, it silences the spectator's censor. It is suggestive; if it's working right, it makes us a little less critical and a little more prone to dream (White-Stanley 2003: 59).

Another book of essays which shed light on this avenue of my research was *Frames of Mind: Reflections on Indian Cinema* which was edited by Aruna Vaasudev and published in 1995. Contributors who were especially helpful to me included Rashmi Doraiswamy, writing on the importance of song picturizations to the illusions created in Bollywood films; Deepa Gehlot, writing on the effect of star status (of both the visual and aural stars) on the reality of whether or not a film is successful; Maithili Rao writing on 'the seduction of song' (241) and its impact on the reality of the film; and the efforts of the film to function like a mirror—which has both the ability to show reality and to create fantasy, depending on the properties of the mirror; and the editor Aruna Vasudev herself, discussing film in terms of dreams, nightmares and illusions to create 'a very intense view of reality' (273).

Two articles in *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance* (2008) were of assistance in understanding concepts of illusion and reality in film music. Anustap Basu discusses varying attitudes toward song sequences in Bollywood film, ranging from the idea of songs disrupting the reality of the film, to songs as that which 'resonates and closes the gap between the reality and fantasy' (170). Arvind Rajagopal's article was also useful in its discussion of how viewers identify with the songs—in spite of the fantastical nature of song sequences, viewers make connections to their own reality of

life, what Rajagopal calls a 'collective identity' (2008: 300). Writing in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music* (2001) Murray Pomerance delivers an article about how songs become part of the 'filmic entity' (56), which creates a new reality for the songs, once they are embedded in film.

Justine Hardy's 2002 book *Bollywood Boy* is about the life of a famous Indian actor, Hrithik Roshan, but as well as delivering biographical information, the book discusses the ways in which Bollywood films, with their song sequences, deliver what the audience has paid to see, which is not their own reality, but dream and illusion (17). I also found articles in a few magazines in the popular press which have been of assistance on this topic. Scott Foundas, in his 2004 article in *Variety*, discusses the concept of 'liveness' and the effect of technology on the finished product: whether it seems alive (real?) or not.

Debra White-Stanley, writing in a 2003 issue of the *Velvet Light Trap* wonders about whether song is a barrier to belief, and hence reality in a film, or whether it contributes to the melodrama or fantasy, and her questions and conclusions were of value to my research. She notes the ability of song to 'convey emotional pitch, coloring, and changes in or heightening of mood. In cinematic melodrama, music can indicate the rise and fall of emotional tension and accentuate or signify emotional conflict' (55).

2.11 Conclusion

The books and articles discussed above in the various sections of this chapter were invaluable to me in my quest to learn more about how playback singers, regardless of the title given to them or whether they provided singing voices for Hollywood or Bollywood films, have been used to create illusions on film that were intended to create an alternate reality experience for those who watch them. I would add that during the course of my research, and especially as I moved on to the writing

process, scholars have continued to add to the literature connected to my area of research. Books, theses and articles have been written that would have been of great benefit to my work, but I came to know about them too late in the process to incorporate them fully into my research. They are excellent contemporaries to the research that I have done, also juxtaposing Hollywood and Bollywood, that relate tangentially to my own work, for example Shruti Vinayak Gokhale's master's thesis of 2010. This and other research parallel and add to the body of information relative to my own work.

In addition, the interviews I was able to hold with a variety of people via telephone or through the use of e-mail messages and discussions back and forth also informed and shaped my research. Newspaper and magazine articles too numerous to mention in this chapter were consulted and have added to my knowledge on the various topics that I needed to search in order to understand various aspects of the connection between playback singers of Bollywood and Hollywood and the illusion and reality expressed in film.

Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter I discuss the research design and methodology used in my study about the experiences of singers whose voices were used in musical films produced by the film industries of Bollywood and Hollywood, focusing specifically on the careers of Lata Mangeskar and Marni Nixon. The study adopts a qualitative research design, with a synthesis of methodologies. Cynthia A. Hunt, in a paper written at the University of North Dakota, suggests the following beliefs that qualitative approaches to research are based on:

1) there is not a single reality. 2) reality [is] based upon perceptions that are different for each person and change over time. 3) what we know has meaning only within a given situation or context (2003).

These underpinnings of qualitative research mesh well with my topic because: 1)

I am interested in where illusion and reality meet through the use of voice doubles in film, in two different cultures each with their own values which are brought to the film-making and viewing experiences, so there can be no single reality, given the many various possible perspectives of both film participants and film viewers. 2) I have already introduced the concept of perception in chapter one. That perception will be different between individuals at the micro level and between cultures at the macro level is an important concept in the context of my research. 3) This study introduces varying situations of context: that of the musical film of Hollywood and that of the musical film of Bollywood will differ from each other in culturally specific ways; and each filmed musical also has an individual context. Musical film is a mimetic medium (as discussed

in Chapter 1) rather than realism, and the film makers of Bollywood and Hollywood take different approaches in the ways they choose to mimic or re-create life both in the telling of their stories and in the use of singers.

Because my research examines behaviours and perceptions of singers, filmmakers and audiences of Bollywood and Hollywood films, it also contains elements of ethnography, because of the connection between people and the cultures in which they operate. Ethnographers often study 'their own people' (Chang 2008: 44), and this may be partially true for me, since the people who make the audience of Hollywood film musicals could be described as "my own" people. But I am also looking at the insiders in the Hollywood film industry, of which I am not one. Even more foreign to me are both the audience and the participants in the making of Bollywood films. I am therefore interested in autoethnography, as I go about "connecting the personal to the cultural" as discussed by Ellis and Bochner (2000: 742), by paying close attention to my own experiences as they pertain to the films, songs and people studied.

Chang discusses how the researcher can develop cross-cultural competence through both studying and experiencing "foreign" cultures. She brings up the concepts of "self" and "other", and how the researcher can become an "edgewalker" by walking on the edges of cultural differences; through their experiences, such researchers can turn 'their former others of difference into others of similarity by reducing strangeness in others and expanding their cultural boundaries' (2008:29). This has certainly been true of my experience with Bollywood movie musicals: where they initially seemed very strange and otherworldly, they now seem "normal" to me; where the high-pitched female voices once seemed very odd, they have come to seem just right for the characters for whom they sing.

3.1 Research Method and Design Appropriateness

The synthesis of methodologies that I have chosen for my research is appropriate for this topic because I am examining the life and career experiences of two particular playback singers, Lata Mangeshkar and Marni Nixon. I am not trying to pass judgement on the work they have done in any way, or make any kind of statistical comparison between the two. Rather, I have sought to understand the work that they have done in Bollywood and Hollywood respectively, and to see their experiences within the context of the time and place in which each of them worked, which required an examination of the history of voice doubling in both Bollywood and Hollywood in order to place the experiences of the two female singers within context.

My synthetic research design includes description, with some review and analysis incorporated. I have developed my research through personal observation, as I have read widely about Bollywood and Hollywood singers and the films their voices are heard in, watched films to observe how well voices and actions were synchronized, and listened to recordings to hear the quality of vocal tone of singers. Through my phenomenological study of the lives and singing careers of Lata Mangeshkar and Marni Nixon in depth, I created of their experiences case studies that describe what the experience of the playback singer may have been during the eras in which these singers were active, with some review and analysis of their work's impact on the film industry in their respective home countries. Because I was also interested in audience reaction to playback singing, I have also utilized a survey in an effort to understand how the American audience member might perceive and react to the use of voice doubles in the films of their experience⁴⁹. All told, the design mostly describes what I have learned through several years of reading, survey taking and interviewing. These experiences

⁴⁹ The survey and results are included in Chapter 4.

have enabled me to better describe both the reality and the illusion inherent in the work of the Bollywood and Hollywood playback singer. I have taken a somewhat flexible approach, since I did not always know in advance where my research might lead me, and I wanted to be able to follow my interest where-ever it might lead. My research design did not call for the passing of judgment, so a design of description, review and analysis to support a synthesis of methodologies seemed to be the best fit for my topic.

3.2 Research Questions

As stated in Chapter 1, I wished to answer these questions: How did the cultures of the film industries of Bollywood and Hollywood and their host countries influence the use of voice doubles in filmed song sequences? Were the contributions of voice doubles treated the same in both industries? How did the singer doing the voice doubling in each culture feel about his or her work? How did the audiences react to the use of voice doubles in films? Did they even notice or care if doubles were used? What kind of interplay might take place between audience opinions and filmmaker decisions about the use of voice doubles?

3.3 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The literature of musicology in the western world has not shown much interest in the work done by playback singers or dubbing artists. A literature search, as undertaken in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, reveals little substantial information about singers whose voices have been immortalized in film soundtracks. Their voices are initially heard by theatre-goers when the films are released; later, they are heard by people who have watched the films on videocassette or television re-runs, or who will watch them on DVD or streaming online; they have been heard on LP and cassette recordings, over the radio airwaves, on CD recordings and via streaming audio. Yet

most audience members are not sufficiently interested in whether the voice matches the face to pay attention to the credits, if the singers are credited. Despite the wide dissemination of their voices over time, these singers are virtually unknown. They are called ghost singers in the Hollywood industry for a very good reason: because of very little public or academic interest in their contributions to film. This apparent lack of interest results in the perpetuation of several fallacies, as identified by cinema scholar Rick Altman (1980).

First, there may be an ontological fallacy: ontology refers to what “is”—in film, there can be a fallacy that film is ‘a visual medium and images are the primary carriers of a film’s meaning and structure’. Belief in this fallacy negates the importance of the soundtrack to the character of the film and therefore erases the value of contributing voices, especially when they are borrowed voices. Second, there may be an historical fallacy, because although ‘sound films are composed of two simultaneous and parallel phenomena, image and sound’ the treatment of the film gives precedence to image over sound, obscuring or even burying the contributions of those who worked to create the sonic elements in the film and often the historical record does not make clear the truth behind the creation of the film’s sound, including its songs (1980: 14). I personally have been very interested in the contributions of singers to filmed musicals, and feel that the songs add value to the character and flavour of films; without the songs, the films would not be what they are. The singers need to be recognized in part to correct the ontological fallacy that sound is less important than vision to the film; and in part to correct the historical fallacy that allows present and future viewers of films to come to incorrect conclusions about who is singing the songs.

However, discussion about these fallacies is missing in the literature pertaining to the film music of Hollywood. This omission does not occur in the literature which

pertains to Bollywood film music. As noted in Chapter 4, the practice of using uncredited ghost voices fell away in India by 1949, so the academic and popular literature of this country both acknowledges that errors in crediting work did occur, and gives evidence of attention to playback singers and their contribution to film from 1949 onward. Given my geographical and cultural distance from India, I read as extensively as I could in journal articles and books dedicated to film music topics in order to understand how playback singers fit into the film music industry in India. I set about to compare the history of vocal substitution in Bollywood and Hollywood in the hope that, in some small way, my dissertation can help towards making the contributions of film singers more transparent and more valued within western society.

Both the Bollywood film and the Hollywood film use specific practices and conventions in their film song sequences. These have developed over time, so this study includes information about the history of song sequences in filmed musicals of Bollywood and Hollywood, which can be found in Chapter 4. Although I read and interviewed widely, I have decided to include only my examination of the careers of two singers, one representative of each film industry, in order to understand the experience of the playback singer in Bollywood and Hollywood. These two women, Lata Mangeshkar in India and Marni Nixon in the United States, are chronological contemporaries, so I felt it relevant to compare them. While their experiences are unique, and not necessarily representative of every playback singer or dubbing artist, they function to inform understanding of what it is like to work as a behind-the-scenes singer in the film industry in two very different places: India's Bollywood and the United States film industry of Hollywood. In my study, Chapter 5 is devoted to Lata Mangeshkar, while Chapter 6 delves into the life and career of Marni Nixon.

In order to understand and compare Bollywood and Hollywood film song practices, as well as the singing experiences of Mangeshkar and Nixon, within their cultural contexts, I felt the need to study criteria pertinent to the reception of film songs by their audiences, which include suspension of disbelief, perception, illusion and reality. Each of these may be consciously or unconsciously put to use by the viewer of film song sequences in film. Following that discussion, I include in this chapter the results of a survey given in 2008. My intent in including the survey was to indicate audience reactions to Hollywood film music and the singers of this music, specifically seeking to learn whether they could tell that voice doubles were used, and whether the use of voice doubles mattered to them; whether such knowledge would create a favourable or unfavourable attitude to the singers or actors in films with song sequences. I felt this was important because audience attitudes have an impact on what information survives and becomes a part of history and what perishes—again, in support of my desire to correct in some small measure the fallacies identified by Altman, so that ontologically and historically, film song literature will reflect the truth about the voices we hear in film.

3.4 Conclusion

In film, producers use both sound and vision as tools to manipulate the perceptions of viewers in order to tell a story from a particular point of view. Their goal is that the audience will momentarily let go of day-to-day reality, suspend their disbelief or cynicism, and accept the visual and aural illusions presented in the film as if they were real for the duration of the film. Since “the play’s the thing” producers use the tools at their disposal, many of which are provided due to technological advancements in sound recordings, to manipulate illusion and reality for the sake of the story. Sometimes they use voice doubles, who are called by various appellations, and then work with

technology to meld sight and sound into what appears to viewers as a cogent whole. They have successfully done this for decades, and continue to do so, both in Bollywood and Hollywood, in their quest to create successful film illusions that are enjoyed and accepted by film audiences throughout the world.

Lip-synching to the Music

An article in the 8 March 2002 issue of *USA Today* advises the reader that one way to tell the difference between the musical films of Bollywood and Hollywood is that in the former ‘actors always lip-synch their songs’ (Wloszczyna 2002: 14). It is an interesting idea, but unsupported by facts as I aim to explain. All films use lip-synch—in the words of Dick Clark of American Bandstand fame, ‘every musical motion picture ever made has used the lip-sync technique’ (Clark 1976:71)—because the recording of music for most films is a separate process from the production of visuals.

However, though Bollywood was not far behind, it was the Hollywood film industry that first used doubling to replace the voice of an actor who looked right for the part, but lacked the necessary vocal skills for the character being portrayed. This chapter will examine that particular incident—in the Warner Brother’s film *The Jazz Singer*—then look at how similar practices began in India’s film industry. I discuss lip-synching conventions in both Hollywood and Bollywood, showing that Bollywood opted for transparency while Hollywood chose to maintain secrecy.

I will alternate between Hollywood and Bollywood as I discuss happenings, events and people and their relationships to the use of playback, dubbing, looping and, by default, the lip-synching that must also be a part of creating a successful illusion that the person seen on screen is actually singing.

4.1 Lip-synching Comes to Hollywood

The Jazz Singer (1927) was the first feature-length sound film to feature singing, the first feature film in which ‘spoken dialogue was used as part of the dramatic action’ (Carringer 1979: 28) and, according to film historian Marsha Siefert, it was also the ‘founding movie of another imagery practice: song dubbing’ (Siefert 1995: 44), with its necessary partner, lip-synching.

The motion picture cameras of the day were cameras only; recording of the sound required the Vitaphone equipment—therefore, the ‘silent sequences were shot first. The complicated Vitaphone sequences’ followed at a later date (Carringer 1979:19). A *New York Times* article of 28 August 1927 explains how the Vitaphone process plays out in the theatre: ‘The singing scenes will have been carefully rehearsed and timed to the second, and in the places in the reel where these are to go, blank film of an equivalent length will be placed.’ Next, the article explains how the live orchestra which usually plays to create background music for a film screening, will have to follow closely so that ‘at the instant when the blank film flashes on the screen indicating the place for the first singing scene the orchestra will stop’ allowing the Vitaphone playback to take over. Given the limitations of the system:

Each of Jolson’s musical numbers was mounted on a separate reel with a separate accompanying sound disc. Even though the film was only eighty-nine minutes long ... there were fifteen reels and fifteen discs to manage, and the projectionist had to be able to thread the film and cue up the Vitaphone records very quickly. The least stumble, hesitation, or human error would result in public and financial humiliation for the company (Eyman 1997: 140).

Warner Brothers had taken a big risk by adding singing segments to a feature-length film; they were offering the audience a different experience from the silent films they were accustomed to, with the possibility that human error might result in a lack of synchronization of sound with image. Despite this and other technical and financial obstacles, Warner Brothers had decided the effort was worth the risk; they wanted this

pioneering movie to be extremely successful, to bring a more realistic experience to the movie-going public, and to change expectations for cinema in the future: a future they hoped would be very fruitful for them, starting with this film, *The Jazz Singer*. To make success a reality, the producers advertised with posters proclaiming ‘*The Jazz Singer!* You’ll see and hear him! on Vitaphone! As you have never heard or seen before!’ (Ad 1927). Because the film was about a devout Jewish family, with a cantor and a rabbi in the cast, they planned the film’s opening to occur on the day before *Yom Kippur*, the holiday that itself features in the plot of the movie. They expected the audience to be fully astounded by the realism of seeing people on the screen singing, and Jolson speaking a few lines, with sound and vision in synchronicity.

However, at least one voice would not sound plausible in the movie’s setting. The producers had cast Warner Oland, a well-established character actor from silent films and one of their contract players, as the cantor. He was Swedish; but:

as long as the actor emoted and lip-serviced his performance adequately, it was acceptable to replace—double—the Swedish accented voice of well-established character-actor Warner Oland on Warner Brother’s payroll by that of an ad-hoc hired Hebrew-singing cantor (Ďurovičová 2003: 3).

When Oland’s character, Cantor Rabinowitz—the father of the character played by Al Jolson—was to sing the *Kol Nidre*, the recitation used to begin the evening service of *Yom Kippur*, ‘a Hungarian tenor, Joseph Diskey, was called in to sing off-camera while Oland moved his lips in synchronization. Thus originated the practice of “voice doubling”’ (MacKay 1994: 16).

One member of the audience at the premiere, Samuel Raphaelson, was the writer of the play *The Day of Atonement* on which the screenplay for *The Jazz Singer* was based. He did not appreciate the interpolation of songs used in the film, stating that they were ‘bad and badly placed. They didn’t develop the relationships so that you could feel the characters’ (Carringer 1979:20).

While Raphaelson would have preferred a non-musical approach to a musical approach to his original material, his remarks about the film make it clear that he did not notice the replacement of Oland's voice with that of Diskey. Nor does it appear that anyone else in the audience caught the substitution. Instead, audience members were caught up in the grand illusion it had been, to have sound and image together so realistically. As Raphaelson said, probably speaking for many, 'I could see tremendous possibilities, once I heard sound on film' (Carringer 1979: 20-21). Though this film had not fully exploited the possibilities, it gave its audience a taste of the future—and the future was filled with sound.

4.2 Playback Comes to Hollywood

The Jazz Singer was phenomenally successful for its time, breaking 'all existing box office records' (Rogin 1992: 419). Other production companies in Hollywood had been watching anxiously to see what audience reaction would be. At Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), the person paying close attention was a young Canadian named Douglas Shearer, who had arrived in Hollywood in 1925 to visit his sister, the MGM movie star Norma Shearer. Although not college educated, Shearer had a keen interest in engineering. When he arrived in Hollywood, he thought it would be interesting to add sound to his sister's current film, *Slaves of Fashion*. That idea did not succeed, but Shearer was hired as a cameraman by MGM, and continued to experiment with ideas for both sound and special effects.

Shearer invented an "early prompter system" that allowed MGM to synchronize pictures in film with sound from the radio for publicity in theatres. That was the stage of developments at MGM when, in 1927, Warner Brothers' *The Jazz Singer* successfully brought sound to the silver screen. MGM appointed Douglas Shearer as head of the sound department, working under a new screen credit 'recording engineer' (Crafton

1997: 207). Shearer would be the first of his profession to win an academy award for sound in 1930, for *The Big House*; but at this point, he just hoped to implement the dubbing technology that had interested him since 1925. His goal was better technology and cost savings for the studio through prerecording voices and orchestras for musical films, so that the recordings could be “played back” during the filming of the action.

This technique was used for the first time for a dance number called *The Wedding of the Painted Doll* from the 1929 production *The Broadway Melody*. Producer Irving Thalberg called for retakes in the filming of a musical routine because he did not like the way the number turned out on film, and he also wanted to switch to colour film. With so much work called for to redo the shoot, Douglas Shearer made a suggestion: ‘since the song and orchestra recording were fine, why not play the recording back on the set and let the new number be worked out to prerecorded music? This would save them the expense of rehiring the tenor and the orchestra’ (Ries 1988: 145). Therefore, the dancers performed to a previously recorded soundtrack, without using the orchestra or singer live.

This method worked out very well; it gave technicians better control of the sound quality for an orchestra’s contribution, since it could be recorded under optimal conditions in a sound studio instead of on the set. Once on the set, using playback allowed for ‘more camera and performer mobility’ (Crafton 1997: 236) since it was much easier to just stop the playback and redo any sections that needed attention without worrying about inconveniencing the orchestra. MGM continued to use playback, learning to appreciate the versatility it provided.

In *Rio Rita*, the studio took their singers and dancers into the desert for an outdoor shooting session, freeing them from the necessity of bringing an orchestra on location. There the players synchronized to the playback ‘just as if they were on the

soundstage' (ibid). Because lip-synchronization was more difficult in close-up scenes, the producers learned to use medium and long shots to disguise problem spots in matching the action to the playback.

Producers quickly understood that the use of dubbing technology combined with lip-synching to the playback solved a host of problems that the inclusion of sound on film had created. For example, no matter how good singers are, if they are moving around rapidly for a long time (as can easily happen after many takes) they cannot 'maintain pitch and vibrato while leaping around a stage' (Giddins 2004:A21). Using playback solves this problem. There was also the cost of filming live sound to consider.

Record companies had been producing recordings in studio settings for years—film companies could use the same system, saving themselves a fortune in setting up orchestras on set. They could avoid the need to do multiple retakes if the sound and action were not aligned properly, since the music was prerecorded. The noises made by various pieces of equipment on the set, such as cameras and cranes, which had the potential to ruin a soundtrack if music was recorded live, ceased to be a problem if dubbing and lip-synch were used. Last of all, the studios 'realized that audiences didn't notice lip-synching, let alone mind it' (ibid: A21). The public responded favourably to films with sound, unaware of all the technological sleight of hand that made it all work. If the audience did not mind what the studios were doing—if they actually liked what they were getting in sound films—then the studios were freed from the constraints of matching voice and body. If there were problems with contracted actors unable to meet vocal demands, the studio could solve the problems with playback.

But some people still had reservations about all the interference with sound that had come about so rapidly since the first use of dubbing in *The Jazz Singer*. Gary Giddins of the *New York Times*, reflecting on this stage in film history, notes that 'most sound

engineers regarded dubbing as undignified; they argued that music ought to be live' (2004: A21). Even the press of the time were aware of dubbing practice, and were not necessarily in favour of it.

For example, an article of the era called "The Truth about Voice Doubling," which was published in the July 1929 issue of *Photoplay*, proclaimed, 'when you hear your favorite star sing in the talkies don't be too sure of it.' The article went on to explain that 'every effort is made on the part of producers to guard the secret of doubling. Picture-makers feel that it spoils the illusion, that it hurts a production's box-office appeal' (Wagner 1998). Ďurovičová reports that an advertisement taken out by Warner Brothers in *Variety* at about this time read, 'In response to public outcry, Warner Brothers are prohibiting any further voice doubling or substitution. Henceforth, when the Warner Brothers players sing, it will be the real McCoy!' (2003: 3). Despite revelations and reservations and protestations to the contrary, both inside and outside of the film industry, by 1930, dubbing and playback had become standard procedure because they worked and made good economic sense to the studios.

4.3 Lip-synching and Playback Come to Bollywood

As mentioned previously⁵⁰, Indian culture has always valued music very highly, with the voice being considered as the best of instruments. Despite the country's varied linguistic and cultural diversity, most art traditions included a core of vocal music. For example, the Marathi and Parsi theatre traditions included singing, as did the folk dramatic traditions of nautanki and jatra, 'all of which interspersed dialogue and action with song and dance' (Manuel 1993: 41). During British rule, when Indians were introduced to European-style musical theatre, their own 'vast, varied and rich musical

⁵⁰ See, for example, discussion on p.24.

tradition' remained the energizing force behind the staged musicals that were successful in their country, for 'vocal music had become a part of the Indian psyche. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Indian genius expressed itself best through song' (Chatterjee 1995:52). Therefore, when Indian filmmakers shot the first short film in 1899, they felt the need to include music. Since they could not do so on the film itself, they used a small live musical ensemble of harmonium and tabla to add sound to what was otherwise a silent film. This practice continued, with the musicians increasing in importance over time.

Gulzar, an Indian writer and lyricist, explains that the musicians in the orchestra pit 'would para-dub the film, speak the dialogue impromptu for the characters, narrate the storyline, explain the visual at times, and also give the background music from the foreground' (Gulzar 2003: 279). It was a natural step for Indians to go beyond what could be provided by the orchestra pit musicians and add vocal music to film, given the importance of vocal music to their culture. So it should be no surprise that India's first full feature film with sound, *Alam Ara* by Ardeshir Irani, would include seven songs.

Alam Ara went into production in 1930, and was released to the public on 14 March 1931 at Bombay's Majestic Theatre, with advertisements claiming it was 'all talking, all singing, all dancing' (Bose 2004: 51). Songs and action for this film were recorded simultaneously; Amrit Gangar explains how the 'sound track was printed on one edge of the frame ... there was no play-back, no dubbing facilities' (1995: 125). When the camera was rolling on the set, there was no way to keep ambient noise to a minimum; the best the crew could do to control noise levels was to film at night.

Gangar suggests that it was almost a 'deliberate decision to fill the films with loud music and sounds because of the wretched theatre conditions, especially in smaller towns and villages. Loudness makes itself at least audible to people' (1995: 128).

Despite its noisy soundtrack, *Alam Ara* was extremely popular, with huge crowds queuing outside the theatre, so much so that a police presence was required to maintain order. *Alam Ara* even became the vehicle for the first hit song arising from a movie: “*De de khuda ken am par pyarre*” sung by Wazir Mohammed Khan, a singing actor who portrayed a *fakir* (Sufi ascetic) in the film. As Khan recorded this song live, accompanied by harmonium and tabla, he had no reason to suspect that singing actors were on their way out in India, because playback was coming.

Most sources credit Raichand C. Boral, commonly known by his initials R. C., with introducing playback into the films of India. Boral was a film music composer who had begun his career with the Indian Broadcasting Company in 1927. Boral’s compositions tended to be ‘*ghazal*-style emotionally charged songs with extensive string sections superbly interpreted by his protégé—the singer-actor K.L. Saigal’ (Gopal 2008: 21). Saigal was actually as much a crooner as a singer, but his singing style and vocal timbre were well-suited to the stationary microphones of the day. However, not every singer-actor was equally endowed with vocal beauty as was Saigal.

R. C. Boral was concerned that mediocre voices would not do justice to the songs he had composed. He suggested the idea of recording the music using professional singers, and then playing it back during the filming of the action as a possible method to cover up for actors who could not sing very well. An experiment with his idea was made with a 1935 film, titled *Dhoop Chaon* (Sun and Shade) in Hindi and *Bhagya Chakra* (The Wheel of Fortune) in Bengali. Director Nitri Bose allowed Boral to ‘bring in playback (as against direct-to-film) singing’ in this film (ibid. 21). Professional singers were hired to record in a sound studio—Parul Ghosh, Miss Harimati, Pahadi Sanyal, Suprava Sarkar and Umasashi. Of these five singers, Sarkar and Umasashi also had acting roles in the

film. The prepared music tracks were played back on the set, and ‘the actors would lip-synch the lyrics’ (Skillman 1986: 135) in the way that Boral had proposed.

The results of that initial dubbing with playback satisfied R. C. Boral, but the idea caught the enthusiasm of producers and engineers for other reasons as well—reasons similar to those of Hollywood producers and engineers. Indian producers found that filming with sound was expensive, requiring more takes than silent films. Also, the microphones of the 1930s needed to remain stationary in order to work properly, yet the sequencing of film songs required actors to move—and dance—while singing. Either the sound would be too noisy or fluctuate in volume as the performers moved, or the performers had to stand still.

Playing back previously recorded songs combined with lip-synching by the actors was a good solution to these problems. Not only did the new playback system cut costs by reducing recording time, but the songs could be ‘released in advance for publicity purposes on discs to the radios and commercial market just prior to the film’s premiere’ (ibid. 135). It swiftly became the norm to produce film song sequences very early in the pre-production phase, so that song segments picturized on the prospective stars could be ‘shown to financiers to raise money for film production’ (Dudrah 2006: 52).

In his book *Behind the Curtain* musicologist Gregory Booth discusses how playback singers ‘gradually took over more and more singing for films’ (Booth 2008: 45) with producers happily choosing just the vocal timbres they wished to use in song renditions. They just as happily chose actors and actresses based on their physical appearance and acting skills. While they still had to be concerned with the intonation of speaking voices, singing voices were no longer a concern for those in charge of casting actors. Producers believed the audience accepted the change to playback—probably

because in Indian culture, the sound of the singing voice carries such high importance. Booth tells of a 1940 letter to a film magazine in which the writer asked actor-singer 'Ashok Kumar to stop singing' (ibid. 42) because his voice was less beautiful than the voices of playback singers whose song renditions were becoming popular.

It took about fifteen years for the transition to be complete, but by the 1950s, playback singers had, with rare exception, completely replaced the singing actor in Bollywood films. What was interesting was that this change was accompanied by a 'shift in vocal style, from a loud, strident, open-throated style typical of live musical dramas to a less ornate style that was smoother and clearer. The new singer specialists explored a greater pitch range, and cultivated a slightly more nasal "crooning" style' (Greene 2000: 543). This kind of style is indicative of concern with how the voice is received and mediated by the microphone and disseminated by loudspeaker systems. As these singers became the norm in the film culture of India, and singer-actors virtually disappeared, 'sound (the singing voice) and image (the actor's physicality) were separate' (Booth 2008: 45). Though separate, also conjoined, because despite the Indian audience's complete knowledge that sound and image emanate from different sources, 'without the visual correlative of the music, in which an actor or actress may go through many fantastic and delectable motions, the song is a voice without a body' (Gehlawat 2008). It is the two taken together that create the desired illusion for Indian film viewers. In the words of film composer Anil Biswas, 'When there is synchronization between the words and the music, a kind of result is achieved that has a lasting effect ... the songs have become immortal because listeners responded to them' (Khubchandani 2003: 469).

4.4 Hollywood Sound Gains Sophistication (1940s)

In Hollywood, sound was incorporated into film so swiftly that by 1931, only four years after the release of *The Jazz Singer*, it was expected to be a part of film, with few people wishing for the days of silent film to return. The Vitaphone technique was short-lived, and though it had helped to popularize sound films, it was abandoned in favor of the orthochromatic film produced by Eastman and DuPont that allowed the picture track and the sound track, though recorded and processed separately, to be 'married' in a final release print (Crafton 1997: 229).

In an issue of *Hollywood Quarterly* in 1946, David Forrest attempted to lay bare the magic behind Hollywood's illusion-making apparatus. He explained that the voice of the movie—the overall sound that accompanies the screen image—is not an original recording of what was heard on the set. The sound track, he said, 'translates into electricity' (1946: 224). The electrical impulses that have been recorded then would be subject to editing, during which process 'the picture film was handled separately as one entity, and the synchronous sound came from a family of sound tracks' which included the dialogue track (actors speaking and natural sounds occurring on the set), the music track of pre-recorded songs and dance music that had been subject to choreography, the dramatic and mood-setting background music, and an additional track for any sound effects called for in the film (ibid.) From these disparate tracks, carefully put together on one track through delicate adjustments of the dialogue, the music and the sound effects, is born 'a new kind of voice, born of many voices' (ibid. 225) that will become the film soundtrack. At this point in the process, Forrest relates, 'Playback records are sometimes made on disk records at the same time as the film recording' so they can be played back by those in production who need to know what the finished sound will be like (ibid. 226).

The desire of motion picture producers was that the sound track should be as realistic as possible, to help viewers reach suspension of disbelief and become engrossed in the stories being unfolded on the screen. However, sound engineers had the tools to create artificial reality by incorporating as much aural illusion as necessary. They had the ability to make sounds louder or softer, turn them on or off, swell them up or fade them out; they could use synthetic sounds by ‘dubbing and adding sounds in post-production’ (ibid. 355). All sounds could become subject to the discretionary will of the sound editor, whose careful attention to sound would result in certain parts of the soundtrack being altered in order to end up with a commendable finished product.

For example, the sound of tap-dancing could be added—dancers could dance in a quieter shoe during filming, with the sound effects being added later (Johnston 2004: 123). Desired sound effects could be created in a studio by technicians; for example, using a mix of sea salt and cornstarch to sound like crunching snow, because actual crunchy snow when recorded does not sound authentic (Horn 2007: 17). Voices could be subject to close scrutiny as well, both speaking and singing voices, so that neither timbre nor pitch nor regional accent need interfere with the illusion being created in the film. Critics would argue that when technology mediates the voices, authenticity is called into question, the issue being the ‘morality of voice dubbing’ (Majumder 2001: 165). Yet, when the entire soundtrack has become ‘susceptible to “sweetening”—improving (or creating) an otherwise nonexistent acoustic environment’ (Crafton 1995: 236)—how can the diligent technician ignore the sound of the voices, which might also sound less realistic even if they are authentic?

4.5 Bollywood Adjusts to Playback and Dubbing

Playback, as a practice, was very much in force in the India film industry after its successful debut in 1935’s *Dhoop Chaon* (Majumder 2001: 166). Since the film, along

with its dubbed soundtrack, was well-received by the audience, it was logical that the practice of dubbing by professional singers should increase. However, until 1947, though singing actors and playback singers were both providing voices for playback, singing actors were still in the majority. During this period, vocal music became firmly entrenched in Indian films, which 'resembled traditional theater forms in their constant alternation between spoken dialogue and sung verses' and by the middle of the 1940s, films consisted of 'more or less naturalistic acting, enlivened by five or six songs and three dance interludes' (Manuel 1993: 41). Then partition came in 1947, and India was divided into two countries along religious lines. It was a harrowing time, forcing many people in the film industry, as in all walks of life, to choose whether to remain in Hindu India or relocate to Muslim Pakistan.

Many talented people made the decision to migrate, including popular singing actors such as Noorjehan, among others. Death or retirement of singing actors around the same time also had an impact on the personnel involved in singing for film. For example, the 'death of singing actor K.L. Saigal in 1946' (Booth 2008: 44), he who had been composer R. C. Boral's favorite, left a hole that playback singers rushed to fill. Among so many changes that were taking place in India at this critical time, the fact that singing actors were being completely replaced with playback singers did not seem to have much impact on the public consciousness.

There were those who noticed. Neepa Majumder writes of the 'considerable anxiety' felt by some members of the public 'regarding the industry's deception in using what were then called "ghost voices" '(2001: 167). But at the time, the studios were using 'voice-casting, or the use of a singing voice that matched both the speaking voice and the personality of the actor' (ibid.), so the practice was generally well hidden. The voices were just a part of the illusion-making of the film itself; they did not draw

attention to themselves, so most people just believed that the face they saw and the voice they heard matched, in exactly the same way that people watching Hollywood films had also believed.

In December 1944, a fan wrote in to *Filmfare Magazine* and posed the question, 'Isn't the system of using ghost voices harmful? The film-goer soon finds out the trick and the song loses its charm.' The editor's reply defended the practice, asserting that, though this was 'an artistic fraud', it was one 'which the producers practice on the film-goers with the good intention of giving them maximum entertainment' (ibid. 168).

Another example, from a 1946 fan letter, says, 'We prefer to hear songs from a gramophone record or a radio instead of from the pictures because we know that the singer on the screen is not really singing' (ibid. 168).

Despite the existence of fans in India who disliked the practice of dubbing, a few short years later, after the song "Aayega Aanevala" from *Mahal* catapulted playback singer Lata Mangeshkar to fame in 1949, dubbing artists were used with even greater frequency. Gradually, over the course of the ensuing decade, the studios even stopped practicing voice-casting; instead, they focused on hiring the playback singers who were most popular. Therefore, by the end of the 1950s, what mattered 'was no longer whether the voice and body matched, but whether the singing voice was recognizable in and of itself' (ibid.). Audiences began to derive their pleasure in song sequences from:

[A] seemingly contradictory set of pleasures, encompassing both knowledge and disavowal of technology. Knowledge of the use of technology enables the recognition of the singing voice as that of the playback star and not of the actress, while the willful disavowal of technology allows the pleasure of watching this well-known voice embodied in the physical presence of another star (ibid.).

Singers had become important enough to the success of films that audience members sometimes chose what films to see based on who would be singing the songs, not just who would be acting in the starring roles. In such cases, performances of songs were

‘authenticated precisely through knowledge of the star persona of the singing voice. The morality of vocal substitution becomes irrelevant when the dual star reference makes it equally a question of borrowing a body as of borrowing a voice’ (ibid.).

4.6 Dominant Female Voices in India

During this period in Indian film history, the female voices borrowed most frequently came from the same small group: Lata Mangeshkar, her sister Asha Bhosle, and Geeta Roy Dutt. While more details about Lata can be found in Chapter Five, which is devoted to her career in playback, suffice it to say for now that she was the singer of choice for wispy, high-pitched girlish voices. Actresses would come and go as audience taste in physical appearance fluctuated, but Lata’s voice, picturized on these many different actresses, came to signify ‘traditional purity, that transcends the female body on the screen’ (Majumder 2001: 178).

Asha Bhosle (8 September 1933) is the younger sister of Lata Mangeshkar. When Lata soared to the top of singing popularity with “*Aayega Aanevala*”, Asha, like others in the playback profession, felt the frustration of competing with the unstoppable Lata. Despite being Lata’s younger sister—or perhaps because she was Lata’s sister—Asha carved a very different niche for her own voice, becoming an expert in the more earthy musical numbers that did not accord with Lata’s squeaky-clean sound. As Lata’s biographer Anantharaman described it, Asha’s vocal quality showed a ‘zest for living, desire to live life instead of glossing over it, which gives her singing a *joie de vivre*’ (2008: 162) that contrasted with the sound her sister was famous for.

Geeta Dutt (23 November 1930 – 20 July 1972) was a successful playback singer during this time period because of her ability to transport ‘the listener along into the world of feelings’ through her ability to ‘be true to the mood of the song (and) evoke the same mood in the listener’ (ibid. 158). While Lata was often contracted to sing for naïve

heroines, it would be Asha or Geeta who would be hired to sing for characters with questionable morals, those that were the direct opposite of the characters that Lata would sing for (Chatterjee 1995: 59).

4.7 Dominant Male Voices in India

During the “Golden Age” of Bollywood, male playback singing was also shared mostly between a small and select group of voices, belonging to Mukesh, Kishore Kumar, Talat Mahmood and Mohammed Rafi. Mukesh (22 July 1923 – 27 August 1976), though he was not a trained musician and had a tendency to sing off-key, sang with such natural feeling that ‘he did not need any famous face to make his songs click;’ instead, film songs would become hits simply because they were in his voice (Anantharaman 2008: 172), so helping the film star toward fame through borrowing his voice. Partha Chatterjee describes his voice as a ‘highly expressive but not too flexible light baritone voice that needed a couple of hours to warm up and get into tune’ but that was ‘sensitive to the hidden nuances in the lyrics’ (1995: 62).

Kristine Landon-Smith names Kishore Kumar (4 August 1929 – 13 October 1987) as ‘probably India’s most famous male playback singer’. Kumar was more than just a singer, because he was sometimes in front of the camera as ‘a performer, an enactor of music’ (Anantharaman 2008: 187). But when he sang playback, Kumar brought the same sense of liveliness even without being seen on screen, with his ‘knack for making songs literally come alive’ and his ‘total involvement’ with the music (ibid.). He became somewhat typecast as a singer for ‘breezy comic numbers’ (ibid.) but that in no way threatened his popularity as a singer of playback for films, since the songs were memorable and well loved by the audience.

Talat Mahmood (February 24, 1924 – May 9, 1998) was a singer of ghazals, a mystic form of sung poetry related to Sufism that has existed in the Indian subcontinent

since the twelfth century. Talat already had a following of loyal fans before his voice was used in film. He was among those who were responsible for ‘institutionalizing’ the use of the filmi ghazal, the ghazal created specifically for use in films (ibid. 175). Like Kumar, Talat tried to make it as an onscreen persona, but found that ‘the audience rejected Talat onscreen even as they adored him behind the mike’ (ibid. 177) even when his songs were picturized on himself! Audiences preferred his voice matched with another singing body.

Lastly, Mohammed Rafi (December 24, 1924 – July 31, 1980) was probably the closest to a male equivalent of Lata Mangeshkar, noted by journalist Erik Davis with Lata as the ‘most popular and prolific of Bombay’s playback singers’ (1991: 75). Rafi is memorable for sometimes challenging Lata’s ideas—he did not support her idea that playback singers deserved royalties (Bharatan 1995: 108); he challenged her claim in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the most recorded voice, stating that his claim to the title was at least as great as her own (ibid. 292). Aside from his sometimes-contentious relationship with Lata Mangeshkar, Rafi was known as a humble and compassionate man who possessed a deep and abiding religious faith.

As a singer, Rafi was in demand with composers and producers, with a voice that ‘defined melody and success in film music’ (Anantharaman 2008: 178). For those of us accustomed to the star system of the western world, it is difficult to comprehend the impact of a voice like Rafi’s, for it is said that he ‘created superstars out of ordinary actors with his vocal virtuosity’ (ibid. 183). People said that Rafi would change his voice to suit the face on the screen, and bring out that face’s best characteristics. Many actors therefore hoped that Rafi would be chosen as the voice behind their picturizations of filmic heroes.

4.8 Monopoly in Bollywood?

That basically seven singers, three females and four males, provided playback for most of the songs used in Bollywood films during this stage in history is a source of contention for many, who charge them with creating and maintaining a monopoly. In their essay, Bhattacharjya and Mehta called the influence of these singers on the industry a 'stranglehold' (2008: 110), suggesting that their clout in the industry was extreme and oppressive. Majumder's examination of the domination of a few singing voices, especially the one voice that represented female purity—that of Lata Mangeshkar—considered the 'implication of the repetition ... of the same female singing voice as the ideal norm of aural femininity across numerous female bodies' (2001: 163). Was the message that all women should sound the same? Was this an appropriate message to the young women of India, in all their diversity? While these singers were wildly popular in their day, at least one fan letter of the period illustrates that not everyone was completely happy with the convention.

For example, one such letter said, 'They have been repeated too often and whosoever's the face, experienced film-goers spot the voice ... Once the identification has been done, where is the emotional thrill in the music? ... where then is the sense in selling a falsehood? It is just bad business!' (ibid. 168). Yet bad business was exactly what the practice was not, because business was booming. According to an article which appeared in the 9 September 1952 issue of *Filmfare*, in which Lata Mangeshkar was credited with singing in '90 out of every hundred films' the author stated that her voice, along with the voices of the others I have noted in the preceding paragraphs, have 'been as much a draw at the box office as the leading stars' (ibid. 171). If these voices were bringing as much cash into the coffers as the star personas of actors featured in the

films, then continual use of the same cash-attracting voices was very good business indeed.

The convention of using the same singing voices continued for several decades. Even with the deaths of Geeta Dutt in 1972 and Mukesh in 1976, the remaining dominant voices sang on, loud and strong. But was this the fault of the singers alone? Or even of the singers in collusion with the composers and producers? Peter Manuel does not think so. He maintains that ordinary people really were demanding the voices of these particular singers, through the exercise of their buying power. He says, 'Far from being inert, passive consumers, Indians have exhibited a remarkable fondness for appropriating and resignifying elements of commercial music—most typically by setting new texts to film melodies' (Manuel 1993: 260). Since the people paid for tickets and then claimed the music of these singers for use in their daily lives, they were demonstrating tacit approval of their continued vocal monopoly.

However, whether there were few voices or many, the Bollywood convention of allowing film viewers to have full knowledge of playback singer identity continued. There was no attempt to mask that reality. Authentic voices for Bollywood meant that the audience knew who was singing, not that the voice of the singer matched the body of the actor.

4.9 Authenticity of the Voice in Hollywood

While India was settling into its convention of acknowledging the separation of voice and body, openly using the talents of two individuals to create one beautiful illusion on film, Hollywood was moving in a different direction. Both cinemas were interested in the 'ideal matching of marketable voice and visually alluring body' (Majumder 2001: 164) in the star persona.

However, in Hindi cinema, the aural was just as important as the visual—while in Hollywood, the visual took precedence over the aural: the looks of the principal actors and actresses carried much more importance than the sound of their singing voices. In Bollywood, singers were credited and awarded for their contribution to film, while in Hollywood, insistence was upon ‘the masking of technology as a means of conveying the authenticity of the performance’ (ibid. 164) therefore allowing viewers to believe that the voice heard belonged to the person seen. When India had ‘started using “ghost” voices, matching the actor’s voice to the singer’s voice’, this had ‘created anxiety over the morality of voice substitution in terms not unlike [that] thematized in *Singin’ in the Rain*’ (Gopal 2008:23), but because of their decision to openly acknowledge playback singers as an integral part of the film-making process, that anxiety disappeared. Not so in Hollywood, where as a matter of practice, the use of such singers was nearly always ‘shrouded or contained by industry publicity releases’ (Chisholm 2000: 128).

Despite the secrecy, the convention of dubbing and the masking of it were both covered in the “Academy Minimum Contract for Artists.” Paragraph five of this document stated that the producer of a film could use a double in the following instances: 1. For foreign distribution requirements ; 2. Censorship requirements ; 3. When failure to use a double may result in physical injury ; 4. When the artist is not available ; or 5. When the artist fails to meet certain requirements of the role, ‘such as singing or the rendition of instrumental music, or other similar service requiring special talent or ability other than that possessed by the artist’ (ibid. 130). If any one of these, or a combination of these conditions exists, ‘the producer shall have the right to double not only the acts, poses, plays and appearances of the artist, but also the voice of the artist, and all instrumental, musical and other sound effects to be produced by the artist, to such extent as may be required by the producer’ (ibid. 131).

In Hollywood, the authenticity of voice became the central issue in the 1952 film *Singin' in the Rain*, in its exploration of the convention that (apparently) actors and actresses sing their own songs. Though the film addresses the change from silent film to “talkies,” the principles illustrated are applicable for any era in which voice dubbing has equaled voice replacement. In the film, silent film actors are asked to use their voices on camera, but not all of them have adequate voices for it—a situation based on what really happened to some silent film stars.

The fictional character Lina Lamont does not have a microphone-friendly voice, has issues controlling her pitch, has a regional accent that is at odds with the character she is asked to portray, and her singing voice is difficult to listen to. Since the voluptuous Lina was hitherto a big box office draw, the studio wishes to continue to use her body to draw an audience. But her voice is highly unattractive—what can the studio do? The answer they arrive at is to use dubbing technology; to use two people to create one character. Only, because this is Hollywood, the truth behind the technology must be kept hidden at all costs, or the performance will lack the all important authenticity. In the film, the audience is shown what happens behind the scenes, as ‘the work involved in the construction of the soundtrack that is ordinarily effaced in sound film’ (Johnston 2004: 120) is instead exposed.

The film has some fun with the idea of voice substitution, sometimes switching male and female voices so that the audience can laugh at the absurdity dubbing makes possible. But overall, the audience is drawn to believe that Lina Lamont has a terrible voice that is replaced by the voice of Kathy Selden, who ultimately receives credit for her singing, but in a way that makes Lina seem absurd; in a way that replaces Lina as a star with Kathy as the “real star” because she can act, dance sing, speak—she can do it all. This film reinforces the western audience’s false assumption that in musicals, real

stars really do it all, at the same time, in super-human fashion. Not only is this untrue, but it was untrue in the production of *Singin' in the Rain* itself. As Neepa Majumder explains:

When we are supposedly shown that the “true” source of Jean Hagen’s voice (Jean played Lina Lamont) is Debbie Reynolds (Kathy Selden) we are meant to accept this fictional revelation as a statement about the authenticity of the actress Debbie Reynolds’ voice; this latter voice is, in fact, being dubbed by someone else who remains uncredited in the film (Majumder 2001: 165).

Ruth D. Johnston clarifies that the uncredited person Majumder refers to was a “ghost singer” named Betty Noyes, who supplied the singing that is supposedly Kathy Selden dubbing for Lina Lamont, while it was Jean Hagen’s own voice that was used for the dubbed speaking voice of Lina, even though we “see” the studio using Kathy Selden for this work (2004: 120). Debbie Reynolds, who enacted the role of Kathy Selden, was unable to supply the singing voice ‘because Reynolds’ own singing voice was so weak, she had to be dubbed as well in the high notes’ (Roth 1990: 61). Though the film suggests the importance of giving ghost singers credit for their work, it fails in that aspect itself, since most people who have watched the film are unaware of the way that the voices of Hagen, Reynolds and Noyes were all used to contribute to one character, Lina Lamont.

In Lewis Jacob’s treatise on American film, he discusses audience fear of being cheated. Keeping this fear under control has always been at the root of the American film industry’s decision to keep such conventions as vocal substitution hidden. Rather than being transparent with the technology, as the Bollywood film industry chose to do, the Hollywood industry has relied on careful synchronization to keep image and voice connected. This maintains the illusion that the person who is seen to speak or sing is the person who is heard to speak or sing, and that sight and sound were produced and recorded at the same time (1968: 435).

The goal is that the sound appears “married” to the image, to close any gap between image and sound, with the voice ‘giving depth to what would otherwise be a flat image’ (Doane 1980: 46). Even when lip synchronization is perfect, if the sound of a particular voice does not appear to match the image—whether the voice really emanates from the image or not—the audience can experience a disconnect similar to that caused by asynchrony.

In *Singin’ in the Rain*, Lina Lamont’s grating voice was incongruous coming from her beautiful body; this caused a lack of synchronization in the minds of viewers. The film ‘shows that synchronization is achieved only by post-dubbing the voice of Kathy Seldon (Debbie Reynolds) over the image of Lina’ (Johnston 2004: 120) or at least by leading the audience to believe that is what happened. The genteel appearance of Lina’s character required a genteel voice to give it authenticity, allowing the illusion to work for the audience. Therefore, *Singin’ in the Rain*, ‘though engaging in the demystification of sound technology in movie musicals demystifies only in order to restore the illusion’ (Gehlawat 2006: 332). As an aside, it is interesting that even the sound of Kathy Selden’s tap dancing in this film was dubbed—by Gene Kelly himself (Majumder 2001: 123).

4.10 More and More Doubles in Hollywood

Since Hollywood valued hiding the use of technology to replace voices, it would be logical to assume that after *Singin’ in the Rain* exposed the magic, studios would have to be more careful in their use of voice doubles. After all, letting the audience in on some of the tricks of the trade might make them more cynical about what they see on the screen. But the audience seemed to take *Singin’ in the Rain* at face value: suspension of disbelief was strong in the culture. Accustomed to accepting screen illusions as reality, at least for the duration of the film, the audience apparently believed that *Singin’ in the Rain* was self-referential and that its story had little or nothing to do with the daily

operations of Hollywood studios—they saw the film as exposing what formerly happened in Hollywood, not what was happening at the time of its release. Therefore, *Singin' in the Rain* had no adverse effect on the use of voice doubles in Hollywood; rather, according to historian Martha Siefert, the practice actually increased over the next few decades following the release of this film (1995: 57).

The use of voice doubles in both *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Jazz Singer*, which was discussed earlier, were for the apparent purpose of replacing a flawed or ineffectual voice with a better one. But there are actually many reasons that a film producer might decide to replace one voice with another. Martha Siefert explains that a studio's rationale for using a dubbing artist might be based on technological, economical or ideological values, or some combination of the three. Once the decision is made to dub, the substitution of voices 'must be concealed to contribute to the musical's major functions—to provide entertainment and create a utopian vision of life and love. Dubbing the ideal image with the ideal voice helps perfect that illusion' (Siefert 1995: 57).

Whether this statement is true or not, it offers an explanation for why Hollywood producers placed such a high value on secrecy. Creating an illusion on film that will sell, that will generate income, that stays within a tight production budget, is what producers are tasked with doing. The producer needs to find the most practical and least costly methods to do this, so, depending on the story, may need a range of supporting talent, including singing doubles—carefully timing everything so the project stays on schedule. In the next few paragraphs, I will examine various ways in which dubbing artists have been used in Hollywood films, and the reasons they were needed.

We have seen that from the late 1920s onward, musical soundtracks for film have been recorded separately, in a recording studio, before the filming of the action

takes place, with the intent to use the tracks for playback during filming. Suppose that the casting department is having difficulty signing the actor who will play the lead, but the production schedule will be compromised unless the soundtrack is recorded immediately, which would cost the studio a lot of money. Therefore, a singer is contracted to record a number that the absentee lead is unable to record. The recording turns out really well; the studio is happy with the sound, and they decide to use that voice rather than go to the expense of recording again once the lead is signed.

Another possibility might be that the singer signs for the recording, but before he signs to film the visuals, scheduling or contractual complications arise which make him unavailable during the time the action will be filmed. This happened to John Gustafson, who sang the critically acclaimed “I’ll Go Home With Bonnie Jean” for 1954’s *Brigadoon*, so the studio retained his vocals, but cast Jimmy Thompson to ‘lip synch the song on the screen’ (Wagner 1998).

A similar situation occurred for Hal Derwin, who became an uncredited singer instead of a player in 1944’s *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* because of the delay that can occur between the time the songs are recorded and the time the scenes are ready to be shot. His wife Louella relates that ‘before they started the picture, he got a radio show that was on a daily basis, and he wasn’t able to work at the studio. They used another fella for the scene, but they used Hal’s voice’ (Wagner).

A studio casting decision gone awry occurred in 1938’s *Goldwyn Follies* for Virginia Verrill. She had begun working as a dubbing artist for Hollywood pictures while still a teenager. Virginia would go to the studio ‘almost every day after school’, where ‘she would sing for leading ladies whose voices were not considered quite up to par’. When Virginia was signed on as the female lead for *Goldwyn Follies*, she thought she

would finally be an actress as well as a singer, and cheerfully began recording sessions for her songs.

However, the studio decided that her appearance was not distinctive enough: she looked too much like actress Myrna Loy. The studio broke the contract, and Verrill 'suddenly found herself ousted by the actress of the moment, Andrea Leeds, who had become an overnight success that year in *Stage Door*' (New York Times 1999). In this case, Virginia Verrill was made unavailable to act to her own playback because of a studio decision. Andrea Leeds' lip-synching successfully completed the illusion begun with Verrill's vocals, and the *New York Times* of 27 February 1938 reported, 'The dubbing was perfect. There was not the slightest flaw in synchronization, and since the preview three studios have asked Goldwyn for the loan out of Miss Leeds for musicals' (Wagner 1998).

Health problems and similar emergencies have a way of creating havoc in the schedules for film production. In 1952, opera singer Mario Lanza was contracted for the role of Karl in *The Student Prince*, a role that would require both singing and acting. However, after recording the songs for the film, Lanza repeatedly neglected to appear at the studio for filming. In March 1953, Thomas M. Pryor reported that the 'principal point of contention' between Lanza and the studio 'had been ironed out' (1953: 24), but a month later, MGM announced they were terminating Lanza's contract due to new demands he had made, though 'the cause of the controversy has never been disclosed' (Pryor 1953: 15).

Laura Wagner, however, claims that it was Lanza's health that made it impossible for him to fulfill his acting obligations (Wagner). It is true that 'at his studio's urging, Tenor Lanza whittled down his overstuffed, 220 lb. hulk to a romantic, semi-princely 178 lbs. But on shooting day, Mario did not feel like working' (Time 1952: 108).

It is also true that Lanza struggled with overeating, crash dieting and alcoholism, and that after he was released from the *Student Prince* film contract, he went into an alcohol induced depression that lasted for about a year. In any case, what this meant to the film was that, though Lanza's body would not grace the celluloid, his previously recorded songs were ready to be picturized on some other star.

In December 1953, *Time* magazine reported that filming had recommenced 'after a two-year delay precipitated by the temperamental walkout of pudgy Tenor Mario Lanza,' whose replacement would be the non-singing British actor Edmund Purdom, who would enact the songs to Lanza's recordings. Purdom remarked 'When I first heard [Lanza's recording], I thought it was full of excesses and a bit hammy. He sings as if he were in perpetual ecstasy. Then I realized how good that is because it gives me a chance to display emotion' (Time 1953: 92). Purdom was a very handsome man, which was probably what helped him to win the role of Karl, but many critics felt that his looks and Lanza's voice were not well matched. Purdom did not go on to achieve fame in Hollywood, but is best known for his role in *The Student Prince*, a film which 'is remembered more for the star who wasn't in it' (Bergan 2009), Mario Lanza, than for Purdom's contribution to it.

Looks have frequently played a part in casting decisions. A great voice, such as vaudeville performer Dick Webster's, could still be used for film songs if the studio could put a more handsome face in front of the camera. In *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1936), that is exactly what Twentieth Century Fox decided to do. In this Shirley Temple musical, Tony Martin was hired to mouth to Webster's playback. Even though Tony's role was small, that of an unnamed radio vocalist, the studio still felt that the kind of looks Dick Webster would bring to the part were not what they wanted, but his voice was exactly right for the part (Wagner).

Another film in which the looks of characters and the requirements for the singing were at odds was *Carmen Jones* (1943). Harry Belafonte and Dorothy Dandridge, both singers, were cast as the leads, 'for their looks, rather than their musical skills' (Smith 2003: 32). Their voices were not of the operatic quality the score—and the estate of composer Georges Bizet—required, so director Otto Preminger decided to dub their voices. Marilyn Horne and LeVern Hutcherson were hired to do their singing.

Of her experience dubbing for Dandridge, Marilyn Horne said, 'I did everything I possibly could to imitate the voice of Dorothy Dandridge. I spent many hours with her. In fact, one of the reasons I was chosen to do this dubbing was that I was able to imitate her voice had she been able to sing in the proper register, that is, high enough' (Marvin 2006: 23). Dandridge also did a very creditable job miming the songs. She watched Marilyn Horne's recording sessions, observing how her neck muscles and facial expressions varied with the music, and did a convincing job of really appearing to sing. Preminger was very happy with the film's outcome, and claimed that hiring singers for acting roles was a good move, despite muzzling their voices, 'because the previous singing experience of the two enabled them to do a more natural and believable job in lip-synching the songs' (Smith 2003: 32).

Many Hollywood musicals have required demanding dance sequences. If the films starred dancers like Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly who were 'established musical stars' (Siefert 1995: 51), their status as box office heavyweights gave them sway with the studios when it came to contracting their leading ladies. The men sang well enough to sing their own playback; but their interest in a partner was her dancing, not her singing. Therefore, the dancing partner's voice would be supplied by a dubbing artist, and the film would end up looking great, because dancers are trained to be good at lip-synching.

For example, when Melissa Hathway interviewed dance professionals about lip-synching for *Dance Spirit*, Maria Jo Ralabate, a competition judge for Dance Masters of America, said, 'Lip-synching helps dancers to express themselves, since they are so used to only using their bodies;' while Stepp Stewart, director of the National Talent Competition agreed, saying: 'It forces a dancer to become a character, and when you become a character, your routine is about much more than the dance steps. Lip-synching uses your personality and that leads to feeling comfortable with dialogue and eventually singing' (Hathway 2001: 65). It is this quality that helps the audience believe in the illusion that the dancer is also singing—even though it is physically impossible to sing and dance simultaneously for any length of time without getting winded. Thus, when Cyd Charisse is seen singing and dancing with Gene Kelly in *Words and Music* (1948), the audience accepts what they see as truth, despite the reality that the female voice is delivered by a 'benevolent ghost, Eileen Wilson' (Kreuger 1972: 52).

Voices that were unacceptable, contractual disagreements, unavailability of the actors, health problems, casting decisions: these are some examples of situations in which Hollywood producers called for dubbing to take place in various musical films. Some of Hollywood's highest paid, most glamorous stars were *always* dubbed 'because their romantic screen images might have been shattered if they had sung for themselves' (Kreuger 1972: 49).

A star's authentic voice might be just the wrong thing to help a film's illusion to succeed, and Krueger identifies Cyd Charisse, Vera-Ellen, Linda Darnell, Virginia Mayo, Kim Novak, Lynn Bari, Alexis Smith and Jean Harlow among this group. Other stars, such as Ava Gardner, initially were always dubbed, but their 'dedication to vocal training eventually enabled them to sing their own songs' (ibid. 49). Krueger's research affirms that the practice of dubbing only increased after *Singin' in the Rain*, when 'the excessive

romanticism of the previous decade was replaced by a robustness that required stars to emerge from the gossamer scrims of artificiality' (ibid. 51). It is ironic that, in order to rid films of artificiality and make them more realistic, the use of dubbing artists increased.

As mentioned in Chapter 2⁵¹, film composer Hanns Eisler, writing in 1947, referred to music in film as having the 'social function of cement, because it 'holds together elements that otherwise would oppose each other unrelated—the mechanical and the spectators'. He explains that, 'It [the music] is the systematic fabrication of the atmosphere for the events of which it is itself part and parcel. It seeks to breathe into the pictures some of the life that photography has taken away from them' (Eisler 1947: 59). Sometimes, to breathe life into the filmic illusion, better and different voices supplied by dubbing artists may be needed to create the singing portion of the music.

4.11 Western Audience Reaction to Voice Doubles

Since I am taking an autoethnographic approach to the perception of playback singers by the audience, I was interested to understand whether others among my 'own people'⁵² notice the voice doubling practices in films, and whether their reactions (if they notice) approximate my own. Therefore, in the spring of 2008, I created a short survey in two parts. I sought respondents among college age music students and music librarians, the two groups of people with whom I am most in contact with in the course of my daily work. The first part of the survey is a ten-point questionnaire. Through its questions, I set out to discover how survey respondents felt about the use of songs in Hollywood films; how much they knew about the mediation of technology, including the use of voice and body doubles; whether they knew about Bollywood films and how their

⁵¹ See p. 65.

⁵² Reference to Chang 2008:44, as discussed in Chapter 3 on p. 106.

expectations for the conventions of Bollywood films differed from their expectations of Hollywood films; and how they felt about the use of voice doubles in film—whether they noticed it, were bothered by it, agreed with it, and whether it should be an open or secretive process. Twenty-six people responded to the invitation to participate in the survey, evenly divided by gender with thirteen male and female respondents. Seven of these were professional music librarians. Twenty-four people were Americans, with one male respondent from Chile and one female respondent from Canada. Questions called for a yes or no, followed up with comments.

4.12 Analysis of Survey Part One

I will present the question and numerical data in chart format, and then discuss remarks of those who participated.

| Question 1 | Yes | Qualified | No response |
|---|-----|-----------|-------------|
| Should songs be used in film (both in musicals and other non-musical genres)? | 16 | 7 | 3 |

A female music librarian said that songs should be used ‘mainly in musicals, but I think it’s nice to have some songs in other films if it fits in well with the plot’. A male music librarian stated, ‘Suspension of disbelief, I guess, is expected for the total enjoyment of a musical. People just don’t break into song at any given moment in their day to day experiences’. A male student who is heavily invested in musical theatre stated the opposite: ‘I think it is great—people break out into song in real life’; and in his life, among his group of friends, this is true. A female student said, ‘Songs are a great way to add variety to a film, and should be used depending on the audience. It is a great way to remember a certain movie.’ A male student responded: ‘Use of songs or singing, as long as it doesn’t take away from the illusion of reality, is good’. This comment accords well with the direction of my research, because whether a film uses a singing

actor or a playback artist, the goal is always that the illusion created by the film will seem realistic to the audience.

| Question 2 | Yes | No | Ambivalent |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Do you believe that singing and action in films are recorded simultaneously? | 1 | 19 | 6 |

Most of the survey respondents realized that film soundtracks are recorded independently from the filming of the action; probably because many music students have been hired as studio musicians for recording projects, or know others who have done this work, so they realize that these are separate tasks. Commenters noted that people might believe these two processes occur simultaneously because ‘it sure looks like’ they go together. When sound and sight are carefully fused together with the appropriate lip-synching, the illusion is complete, and the audience accepts what they see as reality. Other commenters mentioned those times when ‘it is noticeable that they [the recording of singing and action] aren’t in synch, and that this lack breaks the illusion and reminds the audience that the film is not real; this works against the intent of the film.

| Question 3 | Not Surprised | Surprised | Disappointed |
|--|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| If you found out that a voice double sang instead of a starring actor or actress, what would your reaction be? | 10 | 6 | 10 |

Ten respondents noted that they would not be surprised if voice doubles were used for starring actors. Of these, several said that they do not care if this happens; that it does not matter to the outcome of the film. One commented that ‘it would be hard to find people good at acting and singing.’ Several noted that they know it happens ‘all the time’ and that if the replacement voice is good and fits the role, they see nothing wrong with it. The other sixteen respondents (62% of those surveyed) were unaware that this

could happen in film soundtracks, and expressed themselves in terms of surprise or disappointment.

Several of the predominately surprised noted that they would want to know whose voice was doing the singing, one person noting that they felt this information should be included in the film credits. A female music major noted feeling concern ‘if I know that the actor or actress can sing’ but yet the voice is still replaced. The disappointed respondents had the strongest comments. One female voice major said, ‘It would stink! It’s like a lie—you think an actor can do all this stuff, but they can’t.’ Another female student said, ‘They tricked us!’ A female respondent who is a vocal performance major expressed sympathy for the singer, who though the talent behind the voice, did not get to actually appear in the movie. A male student expressed disgust that the person hired to star could not do their own singing: ‘That’s their job and they can’t do it? Ha!’ One of the music librarian respondents noted feeling a ‘little less impressed’ by the star of the film. A male student called into question the casting, wondering why ‘they didn’t cast someone who could sing.’ These comments and concerns, all valid, suggest that people like me oversimplify the complexities of film production and fail to understand, or even think about, reasons behind decisions to use voice doubles, as discussed earlier in this chapter⁵³.

| Question 4 | Yes | No | Ambivalent |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Do you think it is ethical to use voice doubles? | 19 | 3 | 4 |
| Question 5 | Yes | No | Ambivalent |
| Do you think it is ethical to use body or stunt doubles? | 26 | 0 | 0 |

Stunt doubling is an accepted and widely known practice in Hollywood films, and, as can be understood from survey results, no respondents saw the use of body or

⁵³ See the section *More and More Doubles in Hollywood* earlier in this chapter.

stunt doubles as unethical, and few felt the need to comment about it. One librarian noted that the use of body doubles was ‘not only ethical but necessary.’ It is interesting how easily my peers accept that actors not do their own stunts, but find it more difficult to accept that they not do their own singing. While the majority of those taking the survey felt that use of voice doubles was an ethical practice, many of them wished to comment about it. A respondent who did not agree that the voice doubling practice is ethical said that ‘it’s a bad deal if the one who’s better [the better singing voice] doesn’t get recognition.’

Others, though they felt it was ethical to use voice doubles, were also concerned with the recognition factor. There were comments such as ‘as long as it is made known’; ‘clearly noted in the credits’; ‘as long as it is credited and people know there are doubles’; ‘if they are acknowledged fully in the credits’ and so on. These were all interesting responses to me—these are members of the Hollywood audience calling for the full disclosure that is a part of Bollywood film conventions. What they found unethical was not the use of voice doubles, but the secrecy of using doubles and not giving people credit for their work. Survey respondents who were ambivalent about the use of voice doubles all had one question about the practice: ‘Why didn’t they just hire someone who could sing the role?’

| Question 6 | Important | Somewhat important | Not important |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| If a voice double is used, is it important to match the tonal quality of both voices used for the character? | 24 | 2 | 0 |

Every survey respondent felt that matching the voice of the double to the voice of the actor portraying the character was important. One person said, ‘it doesn’t have to be perfect.’ Most, however, felt that really good matching of timbre would be imperative to the success of the film. Five people mentioned that they do not want to be able to tell

they are hearing a double. This is interesting, given that in their comments to question four, most respondents felt that the voice doubles should receive credit for their work, and that they do not want to have the doubling kept a secret. Yet, even though they know that a double is used, they do not want their ears to cue them to the use of the double while they are watching the film—they want to be able to ‘think it’s the person singing.’ Eight people commented that if voices match, the film is more believable. For these film viewers, perception of reality is affected by timbre of voices. If voices do not match, it seems ‘so unreal’ and ‘ruins the movie’.

| Question 7 | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Have you ever watched a Bollywood movie? | 12 | 14 |

Once people have been exposed to Bollywood film they very quickly become aware that voice doubles—playback singers—are used, and this may raise questions about the practices of Hollywood films. In my 2008 sample, survey respondents were almost equally divided between those who were and were not familiar with Bollywood film. Asked to comment on the singing if they answered yes to this question, most did so. A male student said ‘it was kind of weird, but the “new” aspect was fun,’ while another male student, who also found Bollywood films weird, said this was only because of ‘not understanding the cultural significance.’ One male student said he thought ‘the singing was better than the plot.’ A female student said she ‘loved the singing and the music behind—it was like watching an old musical with new music.’ A male librarian noted that ‘the voices didn’t always match well.’ A female graduate student said that the Bollywood experience is ‘different from our [Hollywood’s] aesthetics, but I like the use of song and dance a lot—I put it [Bollywood] in a separate

category'. The unmatched voices and the differing aesthetics do mark Bollywood film apart from Hollywood film, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

| Question 8 | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Bollywood gives a separate award to the best singers in a movie as well as the best actors. Should the Academy Awards do the same thing? | 21 | 5 |

Most of the survey respondents enthusiastically supported the idea that voice doubles who sing for important Hollywood film roles are deserving of recognition through the same award system that acknowledges the work of actors and others in the film industry. Their comments were similar to those for question four, the desire to 'give credit where credit is due,' to quote one respondent whose sentiment was echoed in various expressions by sixteen others. A male student noted that he is already aware that sound and image are recorded separately, which leaves opportunity for different voices to be used, so an award would help the academy to be upfront about what goes on behind the scenes; another stated that singing and acting are really 'separate regions of talent' so an award for each makes sense. One vocal performance major brought up the idea that if actors do not sing their own songs, they 'didn't do the entire role themselves,' so two award categories would allow each person to be judged on what they did. A male student noted that while it might be a great idea, 'I don't see it happening.' Most of the nay-sayers agreed with this. A female graduate student who answered this question with a "no" went on to comment that, 'It would be a stretch for our culture and it would require a separation of talents, but it's not a bad idea. I like the integrity.'

One female student did not feel this idea would work in western culture; she noted that the awards are public, and the 'public would be too shocked to find out there were doubles.' A male student echoed this idea; he said that the whole point of singing in a film is that 'the audience is supposed to believe the character is singing,' so pointing

out the use of the double through an award would be counterproductive. Last of all, a female student wondered, ‘where does it stop?’ In other words, who should and who should not get awards? So many people contribute to a film that she felt giving awards for doubles was going beyond what was necessary or important. A male librarian felt that ‘there isn’t enough outright singing (that I’m aware of) in American films to warrant such an award.’

| Question 9 | Yes | No | Ambivalent |
|---|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Do you agree that the use of voice doubles in Hollywood movie musicals should be a well-protected secret? | 1 | 20 | 5 |

Most of the survey respondents (77%) are not big fans of secrecy, and several said so quite firmly: ‘I don’t like secrecy.’ A male student respondent said, ‘we should just be honest.’ Many of those surveyed spoke again about the need to give proper credit to those whose talents are used in films; if it is a secret, the singers will not receive credit, and they did not think that was fair. A female student felt that we need to ‘make it [the use of singing doubles] normal, or hire singing actors’. A female graduate student said, ‘the nature of musicals is a focus on singing talent, and [credit] should be given to the rightful performer.’

Those who were ambivalent about this question also had interesting comments. One female student said, ‘I think it’s kind of fun to know [who is singing] but then again, kind of disappointing if I like the actor’ so she is unsure whether she likes trade secrets to be revealed or not. A male student said, ‘I don’t think it should be a secret, but I don’t think it should be actively publicized.’ His take seems to be that if asked about it, the industry should acknowledge the doubling that was used, but neither should they go to Bollywood lengths and use the singer’s voice as a box office drawing card.

The lone respondent who felt that the use of voice doubles should be a secret commented that keeping the secret would ‘appease the masses.’ He expressed a worry

that much of the Hollywood audience could not handle the disappointment of knowing what goes on behind the scenes. One librarian feels that he, as an audience member, would have no adverse reaction at all to knowing that voice doubles are used, stating that he would be ‘completely unaffected’ one way or the other, but he just wishes ‘they’d use actors who *can* sing the score—well.’

| Question 10 | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Do you think there are any good reasons to use voice doubles? | 21 | 5 |

I asked this question because I was interested to learn whether respondents had ideas about when it might be appropriate to use doubles. Twenty of those who answered this question with a “yes” response noted that doubles could and should be used to replace the voices of actors who cannot sing well. One person mentioned the possibility that illness might interfere with an actor’s ability to sing. There are actually quite a few situations, beyond correcting faulty voices, in which studios are forced to use doubles due to contractual agreements, illness or even death of people involved in the project, recording costs, scheduling discrepancies, as well as singing voices that, though fine in the audition, do not mediate well with recording technology, as discussed earlier in this chapter⁵⁴. Those who responded “no” to this question all expressed the idea that a singing role is a singing role and should be cast as such. They all stated that if an actor cannot sing, casting for that role should be reconsidered; singing actors should be used for singing roles.

4.13 Analysis of Survey Part Two

The second part of the survey lists films that are commonly seen in the Hollywood market, and asked the same twenty-six respondents to indicate whether they had seen these movies, and whether they thought voice doubles were used at any

⁵⁴ See section *More and More Doubles* in this chapter.

point, by any character, in the films. While most of the films listed are considered to be “musicals” I also included a few that are not categorized as musicals, but which do include singing. I did not include Bollywood films on the list for several reasons. First, half the survey respondents have not watched Bollywood films and so would not be familiar enough with them to recognize them by title. Second, for those in my group of respondents who were familiar with Bollywood filmmaking, it would be a known fact that using playback singers is the norm in Bollywood filmmaking, not something they would have to think about. I did include the cross-over film *Bride and Prejudice*, which was previously discussed in Chapter 1, because I was interested in knowing whether people thought it followed the conventions of Bollywood or of Hollywood. The following table lists fourteen films by title in the first column. The second column indicates how many of the respondents had actually seen the film. The third and fourth columns record whether the respondents who had seen the film believed that voice doubles were or were not used.

| Name of Film | Saw Film | Doubles used | Doubles not used |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Bride and Prejudice</i> | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| <i>Charlie & the Chocolate Factory</i> | 20 | 8 | 9 |
| <i>Chicago</i> | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| <i>Grease</i> | 20 | 7 | 13 |
| <i>Hairspray</i> | 20 | 4 | 16 |
| <i>High School Musical</i> | 19 | 8 | 11 |
| <i>King and I, The</i> | 19 | 14 | 5 |
| <i>Moulin Rouge</i> | 13 | 3 | 10 |
| <i>My Fair Lady</i> | 21 | 18 | 3 |
| <i>Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?</i> | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| <i>Phantom of the Opera, The</i> | 20 | 10 | 10 |
| <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> | 20 | 8 | 12 |
| <i>Sound of Music, The</i> | 23 | 7 | 16 |
| <i>West Side Story</i> | 22 | 14 | 8 |

Although the data from the above chart would not extrapolate to the population at large, it does allow for some interesting observations. For example, because *Bride and*

Prejudice is associated with Bollywood, people are more likely to think that voice doubles were used, since using them is a conventional practice of that film production centre. Because of publicity surrounding Marni Nixon's singing in several important musical films, particularly *My Fair Lady*, people were likely to know that doubles were used in such films⁵⁵. However, for a film like *The Sound of Music*, whose star Julie Andrews is renowned for her singing ability, people would be more likely to suppose that voice doubling did not occur, even though at least two of the major characters' singing voices were doubled, and one of them⁵⁶ was nominated for an Oscar despite her decision not to sing—for it was the actress in this case who requested the double. In films that are not musicals per se, such as *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*, people were more likely to believe that doubling took place since they do not think of the stars, such as George Clooney, as singers. They would be correct in this supposition, since this film was dubbed by other singers. For *Singin' in the Rain*, which is about voice doubling, people were more inclined to think that doubling was not used, when in fact this film was dubbed in many layers, as was detailed earlier in this chapter.

The survey served to strengthen my supposition that many people in the American audience of filmed musicals do not think much about the voices that render the music. They generally watch a film with the preconceived notion that the mouths they see moving on the screen belong to the voices emanating from them, and vice versa. For some respondents, my survey questions gave them their first opportunity to even consider the idea that such might not always be the case. Up to that point, they have the firmly held belief that singing and acting would always have the same source.

⁵⁵ These will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

⁵⁶ Peggy Wood, whose singing voice was supplied by Margery McKay was nominated for an Academy Award as best supporting actress. See p. 224-225 in Chapter 6 for details.

4.14 Bollywood Voices into the New Millennium

To Indians, the voice is the pinnacle of musical instruments due to its ‘most fundamental human expressive characteristics,’ and therefore, in cinema, the ‘embodied voice is one of the most powerful forces to transmit and elicit emotion’ (Sarrazin 2008: 205). The habit of using two performers—one with the most beautiful, expressive voice possible; the other with a face and body that has been deemed to be just right for the part—has continued to be the convention of Bollywood films. The film song continues to make its appearance in almost all films produced in Mumbai, following conventions that are expected and desired by Indian audience members, who enjoy the way the songs ‘liberate the dreamer [film viewer] from the constraints of day-dreaming’ (Gehlawat 2006: 333) by giving them an illusion to immerse themselves in. However, despite the continued popularity of film song sequences, as the 1970s were reached, there began to be ‘a craving for newer voices in playback’ (Anantharaman 2008: 156). The audience, having for many years listened to the monopoly of voices addressed earlier in this chapter, was ready for a change.

For one thing, Bollywood fans began to be interested in watching action films, rather than the mythological or relationship oriented films of the past few decades. Just as in Hollywood, a host of “angry young man” movies were made in Bollywood; the equivalent of James Dean was Amitabh Bachchan, who shot quickly to stardom, earning a National Film Award for Best Newcomer in 1970, and then staying in the spotlight for years. Besides his on-screen charisma and obvious acting talent, Amitabh Bachchan had a remarkable baritone voice.

Rajinder Dudrah explains, ‘Bachchan is well known for his appropriation of Indian folk songs, for his articulate command of the Hindi language and for his imposing voice that has delivered some of the most memorable dialogue in Hindi cinema’

(Dudrah 2006: 84). But not only dialogue—Bachchan’s distinctive voice can sometimes be heard singing his own playback, since he is ‘able to sing in tune’ (D’Souza 1992: 73). If there were renewed interest in matching the voice of the singer to the timbre of the actor’s speaking voice, it is no wonder that producers allowed and encouraged Bachchan to sing for himself, since as Gehlawat claims, his voice is ‘instantly recognizable’ (2008).

Anuradha Paudwal started as a playback singer around the same time that Bachchan began his acting career, actually singing her first playback in a film called *Abhimaan*, which featured Amitabh Bachchan and his wife Jaya in the lead roles. Some of Anuradha’s initial work was as a dubbing artist, which is not the same thing as a playback singer in Indian terminology. While a Hollywood dubbing artist is exactly the same thing as an Indian playback singer, an Indian dubbing artist fills a lesser role. These singers record in place of playback artists, only to be rerecorded later by upper-tier singers such as Lata Mangeshkar. Some of the singing assignments for dubbing that Anuradha accepted caused conflict with other singers, especially on those occasions when composers would decide to retain and use her recordings in films instead of replacing her voice with Lata’s. So much conflict, in fact that Anuradha may perhaps ‘be remembered more for her battle to oust the Mangeshkar hold on Bollywood than for the songs she sang’ (Anantharaman 2008: 196).

Despite Anuradha’s rivalry with other singers, particularly Lata, she claimed admiration for Lata’s singing style, which she made an effort to imitate through rigorous daily practising. This was the way she learned to sing, Anuradha claimed; she received no formal classical singing training. Perhaps if she had received vocal training, it would have helped in ‘honing her skills as playback singer’ (ibid. 197), which some critics believed she needed to do. Then Anuradha may have met with more lasting success,

instead of taking her place in Bollywood history as the singer who tried unsuccessfully to take Lata Mangeshkar's place.

Playback singer G. Venugopal states that 'the only way to attain eternal glory in the world of music is unflinching devotion to pure music and developing one's own identity in rendering songs' (Kerala 2008). This was the mistake that Anuradha made— forever copying Lata. Venugopal did not wish to copy any of the male singers of an earlier era, but to make his own way and thereby find a place for his voice in Bollywood films. His first playback assignment, in *Odarathammava Aalariyam*, was a very small verse sung with a group. From there, more and more work came his way, but very slowly, and with setbacks and disappointments along the way.

Finally, the song "*Raree rareeram raro ...*" from the Malayalam film *Onnu Muthal Poojyam Vare* became a hit in India. Venugopal explains, 'Frankly, even after the song was recorded I was tense. It was a sort of fear that somehow the song would not be there in the film, or would never see the light of day. The relief on hearing it was simply wonderful. And it was doubly sweet when it became a hit' (Pradeep 2008). When a song is successful, more music directors want to work with you, but these are not the only people who can influence a singer's career. Harish Bhimani explains, 'People outside the film industry are under the impression that the choice of a playback singer is left entirely to the music director. But often that is not so. Apart from the producer, director or recording company, even actors and actresses have their say' (Bhimani 1995: 155); for example, actress Madhubala's contracts frequently specified that her singing voice would be supplied by Lata Mangeshkar.

Another singer who has followed the example of Lata Mangeshkar is Kavita Krishnamurthy. Like Anuradha, Kavita started out in dubbing rather than playback. Upon one occasion, when she had dubbed in Lata's place, 'Lata arrived (and) expressed

a desire to hear the dubbed version. After listening to it carefully, she declared, “This girl has done such a wonderful job, why do you want to record it all over again in my voice?” ‘ (Bhimani 1995: 156). With Lata’s approval, the producer used Kavita’s recording, thus beginning her career in playback.

Neepa Majumder quotes from an interview with Kavita that appeared in the June 1996 issue of *Filmfare* magazine, in which she said, ‘I will be eternally indebted to Lataji. I started my career singing her songs which she would dub over later ... I owe everything to her’ (Majumder 2001: 181). Kavita’s relationship with Lata, though it began in a similar way to Anuradha’s diverged significantly. While Anuradha seemed to always be involved in controversy, Kavita must have understood playback politics better. She has nothing but gratitude for Lata. Kavita has grown as a singer, demonstrating phenomenal ‘capacity to churn out hits’ with much exuberance and expression shown in her voice, such as in the very successful “*Dola Re Dola*” from *Devdas* (2002). The ability to generate hit songs, and bring money in at the box office is what, in the final analysis, ‘has always counted more than anything else in Bollywood’ (Anantharaman 2008: 197).

Although Kavita Krishnamurthy has been rewarded for her success with Filmfare Awards and a Padma Sri, one of India’s highest honours to civilians, she sings less frequently for films at present. She claims that songs too often lack quality; in the film industry, Kavita says, ‘everything has changed. I have to wait for that one good song.’ She feels that singers receive less credit now than they did when Lata was in her heyday, because even if a song is popular and gets played frequently on the radio, ‘the current generation may not get to hear the singers’ names. Radio hosts chat on about the scene, the actors, the movie, but not the playback singer or composer.’ As for the film credits themselves, Kavita notes that ‘It used to be that names like Mohammed Rafi,

Lata Mangeshkar were right at the beginning of the film credits' but the present trend is for the names of the playback singers to appear near the end, with the names of those who have made small contributions to the films. She continues to hark back to earlier times and her admiration of Lata Mangeshkar, who is, to Kavita, 'the most beautiful person ... The way she sang, the beauty of the soul came out. For a musician, what you look like and how you present the music should be less important' (Rajan 2008).

4.15 Conclusion

Several years ago, Ann R. David interviewed Bollywood box office sensation and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai about her take on films and film music in India. Aishwarya said, 'Music and dance are a very strong part of our movies. They're intertwined, they're part of our storytelling. Very often our songs translate emotions, translate devotion, love, agony, pain, separation' (2007: 6). Aishwarya shows these emotions on her face and via her actions; she allows others to use their voices to complement her picturizations.

For example, Shreya Ghosal sang for Aishwarya's character, Parvati, in the award-winning film *Devdas* (2002), a performance that won Shreya both the National Film Award and the Filmfare Award for best female playback singer. Another Bollywood idol, Shah Rukh Khan, also appreciates the efforts of the singers who supply his voice, though in his case, it is usually the same singer, Udit Narayan (Anantharaman 2008: 194).

When Shah Rukh talked with interviewer Silja Schriever-Klassen about the obligatory five or six song-and-dance numbers that typically figure in all Bollywood films, he said, 'Hindi films, or Bollywood films, are popular films with a structure similar to that of the classic Hollywood musicals of the fifties and sixties ... which are concerned about how to be happy and to lead a good life ... In India, we still generally display our

feelings directly, we are still able to cry in public, and do it often. And this is exactly what our films are about, sorrow and happiness' (2006: 66). He sees the role of the singer as being conduits in carrying these human emotions to the audience as a role that is best filled by a really good playback singer.

While song sequences are not as ubiquitous in the films of Hollywood as in those of Bollywood, the statements made by Aishwarya Rai and Shah Rukh about what music adds to cinema may apply, because when songs are used in Hollywood films, they are there to help the audience feel the same kinds of things: emotion, devotion, love, agony, pain, separation. All of these feelings can be carried deeply into the hearts of viewers when a singer is able to express these feelings through his or her voice, with the singing accompanied by emotion-appropriate visualizations on the screen. The voices used must ring true, and sometimes, if not frequently, the best voices for the job do not reside in the person who has the best face for presenting the necessary emotions visually; and so we have the playback singer or dubbing artist to step in and make the aural part of the illusion work, while the actor lip-synchs in just the right way to make the visual part believable.

Opera star Dame Kiri Te Kanawa has been one of the voices chosen for such illusions. For example, she sang for Glenn Close in *Meeting Venus* (1991). Because Dame Kiri is comfortable enacting roles on stage, people will ask her 'Why don't you do films, Kiri?' Her answer reflects her understanding that the actor of film is using different methods to create a role than those used in stage acting, methods that she does not consider herself to be expert in, so she will tell questioners, 'Well, just use the best bit—my voice' (MacKay 1994: 22).

In a 1995 interview, prolific Hollywood dubbing artist Hal Derwin said, 'Back in the old days while I worked for Warners, I used to sing for the actors, and the studio

would dub my voice in. To this day I laugh when I see guys like Cliff Robertson singing with my voice!' (Wagner 1998). Derwin would laugh because he knew the truth behind the technology, and that is one movie truth. But in film, there is another truth: the truth of the story being told. To make the story ring true to the listener, Hal Derwin's singing was required, because if Cliff Robertson had sung, the audience might have laughed—but inappropriately, because Robertson's singing would have been incongruous and unbelievable while Derwin's would deliver the truth of the story correctly. The truth of the technology and the truth of the story do not need to be the same truth. But both truths are needed to do their part, so that 'when the lights go down, every member of the audience knows what they are going to get, what they want and what they have paid to see' (Hardy 2002: 17) and that is illusion—illusion made the best it can be with really good actors and their unseen helpers with great singing voices.

Playback Icons: Lata Mangeshkar

In this chapter, I will turn to a discussion of a woman who is among the most famous women in all of India, whose fame has lasted through six decades. Only in India would it be possible for a playback singer's fame to equal or transcend that of movie stars or politicians. Ratna Rajaiah of *The Hindu*, an Indian newspaper, describes Lata Mangeshkar as 'the voice of India' (2003), for her voice is ubiquitous in the film music heard in theatres, in popular *filmi geet* (film music) which dominates the radio airwaves, and on cassette tapes and compact discs played by people throughout the land. London playwright Kristine Landon-Smith has called Mangeshkar 'the Diva of Indian playback singers' (1998). Some people believe that she has rightfully outshone all the competition; others think she is a shrewd and calculating business woman who has managed to brainwash listeners and monopolize film music in India for decades.

Film music historian Ganesh Anantharaman would even suggest that 'in tracing Lata's career, you are in effect charting the course of film music in Hindi cinema' (2008: 151). Mangeshkar was for many years reputed to have the most-recorded voice on earth, and was given credit for that distinction by the *Guinness Book of World Records* between 1974 and 1991, when disputes to the accuracy of the claim caused the information to be deleted (Bharatan 1995: 19-20, 292). The world record for most vocal recordings was eventually settled upon the head of Lata's sister Asha Bhosle (Banerjee 2011). Though the controversy has been resolved, for Bollywood film fans, 'the

numbers game of who sang how many songs is of enduring passion and interest' (Majumder 2001:171) and some continue the discussion.

On the occasion of her eightieth birthday, Lata Mangeshkar's well-wishers were effusive in their praise. Playback singer Sunidhi Chauhan said 'She is the Goddess of music. She is not only an inspiration to me, but to everyone,' while another singer, Abhijeet Bhattacharya, said 'For me, Lataji is next to God. I feel, music is alive today only due to her. I am fortunate enough to have sung songs with her' (Deccan Herald 2009). Lata is a Goddess of music? She is next to God? How has it been possible for a tiny maiden lady clad conservatively in white to wield such power and influence? In this chapter, I will discuss Lata Mangeshkar's life and work as a playback singer, from her humble beginnings to her present status at eighty years old in hopes of gaining an understanding of her position in Indian music and society. Many sources discuss Lata Mangeshkar in a reverential manner; that tone may unintentionally be communicated.

5.1 Birth and Youth

Even before Lata Mangeshkar was born on 28 September 1929, her parents believed that their child was marked for greatness. The story goes that Lata's mother was in the Mangesh Temple in Goa performing religious rituals. As she cupped her hands to receive holy water in them, a lotus flower somehow burst from the too-small water outlet and into her waiting hands. When she told her husband what had happened, he exclaimed, 'Do you know that this is a gift from Lord Mangesh? I think that we are going to be blessed with an extraordinary child!' This incident, coupled with auspicious astrological readings for the child, convinced Lata's parents that she would grow up to be an exceptional person (Rajadhyaksha 2010: 8).

Lata's birth was a happy time for her father. Dinanath Mangeshkar had lost both his first baby girl and his first wife to death within months of each other. Now happily

married to his first wife's sister, the baby carried by Shudhhamati⁵⁷ would become the first living child of the family. It was a musical family—Dinanath was a classical singer and actor known for his good looks and charming voice. At birth, the baby was named Hridaya, but later her father began to call her Latika, the name of a character in a play, *Bhaaw Bandhan*, which Dinanath had been involved in; but this name, Latika, was also the name of Dinanath Mangeshkar's deceased daughter by his first wife, which may have also been a factor in the choice of name (Khubchandani 2003: 486).

Tribune of India reporter Kuldip Dhiman relates that when Lata was only five or six years old, she overheard one of her father's voice students singing a raga called "puria dhanashree" incorrectly. 'In all her innocence she not only pointed out the wrong notes, but also gave a perfect demonstration' at which point her father walked in and 'was amazed at his daughter's amazing mastery over the complex raga. Later he said to his wife, "Imagine we have a gifted musician in our house, and we didn't even know" ' (Dhiman 2000). Soon, Lata began musical training with her father, as did her siblings, of which there were three sisters: Meena, Asha, Usha; and one brother, Hridaynath. Since Dinanath was busy building a career, he did not have a lot of time to devote to teaching his children, but daughter Asha remembers 'Baba⁵⁸ used to teach Didi and Meenatai early in the morning. We used to like Didi's voice because it was so sweet. But it was a frail one' (Rajadhyaksha 2010: 13).

Sources differ on when Lata began to sing in public for paying audiences; Lata Khubchandani's article in the *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* reports her age as young as five years old (2003: 486), while biographer Harish Bhimani gives the age of nine (1995: 71). Mangeshkar's father worked steadily on stage and in concert, and

⁵⁷ Lata's mother was also called Shevanti; and Srimati, which is Sanskrit for Great Mother, or Mother of all mothers.

⁵⁸ Baba is the Hindi word for Daddy; Didi is the Hindi pet name for oldest sister.

sometimes was extended opportunities for his children to perform as well. Lata, as the oldest, was the first to be called upon.

An exposé written for Lata's 79th birthday gives 16 December 1941 as the date of Lata's first performance for an *All India Radio (AIR)* broadcast, and reports that when her father heard her voice over the air waves, 'it moved him to tears. "Lata will take the family name further" is what he said on that day' (RnM Team 2008: 1). Lata's father was very proud of her, and she was equally proud of him and respectful of his wisdom. He taught her classical singing techniques, stage presence, and about how she should conduct her life. He told her that 'once you are convinced that you are on the right path, once you honestly believe that what you are doing is correct, you need fear nobody,' (Bhimani 1995: 65) an idea which she must have taken to heart, because she certainly became an unstoppable force in the arena of playback singing.

Because Dinanath Mangeshkar was a handsome and talented singing actor, it was natural that he should gravitate toward film, not only because it was a new and interesting medium, but also because if he was to be successful as a breadwinner, he had to follow the money, which was moving from the concert hall to the movie theatre. When the opportunity was extended to him by his close friend Vinayak Damodar Karnataki, the owner of the *Navyug Chitrapat* movie company, Dinanath made the transition. Just as Dinanath had involved his children in theatre performances, he began to involve them in filming, though he was careful not to exploit them.

When Lata was eleven years old, the producers of the film "*Khazanchi*" (1941) organized a music competition, which Lata won (Bhimani 1995: 75). By early 1942, she was singing and acting with some of her siblings in Karnataki's pictures, but there was perhaps no serious effort on the part of this thirteen-year-old to build a career. That all changed when first a film project that her father Dinanath had heavily invested in

flopped, 'plunging him into deep financial trouble,' followed all too swiftly by his death, in April 1942, due to complications from alcoholism (Bhardwaj 2003). Thus it became necessary for Lata, as the eldest child, to take over as breadwinner.

5.2 Lata Leads the Family

Teenage Lata, driven by economic necessity, joined *Prafulla Pictures* as 'an apprentice, a gofer, and a bit player' (D'Souza 1992: 73). She was up against stiff competition in her desire to find gainful employment singing playback. The popular Zohrabai (Zohra Bai Ambala Wali), with her 'robust, unrestrained style' of Hindustani classical singing, was the most recorded voice of the decade 1940-1949, with over 1000 film songs attributed to her, according to the *Hindi Film Geet Kosh*. Also actively working was Shamshad Begum, who had been among the first of India's playback singers, and who had in fact sung playback for *Kazanichi*. Singing actresses still existed at the time; Noorjehan and Suraiya, for example, were frequently cast in the films of the decade.

Noorjehan was only three years older than Lata, but already by 1942 she had a solid reputation as a singing actress with 'the most expressive and most powerful female voice' in the Hindi film industry (Chatterjee 1995: 56). Suraiya, who made her film debut in 1943—her popularity would peak between 1947 and 1950—was also a singing actress, and very young; several years younger than Lata. She is described by Ganesh Anantharaman as the highest paid singing star of her time (2008: 146). In an article in *The Hindu*, 10 May 2007, Ratna Rajaiah, after describing how competitive the Indian film industry of 1942 was, including the female competition I have noted above, said, 'into this scenario stepped a thin, wisp of a girl, just 13 years old, looking for work to feed a destitute family of six with her only qualifications—her voice and the training that her father, a classical singer of the *Gwalior* school, had given her before dying bankrupt.' Lata was able to get paying work in 1942, participating in the film *Pahili*

Mangalagaur, a comedy about arranged marriages, in an acting part, but also ‘was called upon to lend her voice, too—without any additional remuneration’ (Bhimani 1995:84) since she was an accomplished singer. Very little is known about this film today, except its importance as the movie in which Lata Mangeshkar began her career.

5.3 Lata in Mumbai

When Vinayak Damodar Karnataki moved his film company to Bombay (now called Mumbai) in 1945, Lata also relocated. She did not meet with instant success; however, she began to take measures to improve her marketability. She took Hindustani classical singing lessons from Ustad Amanat Ali Khan Bhendibazaarwale, and later, when he removed to Pakistan in 1947, she found new teachers in Amanat Khan Devaswale and Pandit Tulsidas Sharma (Jha 2009). From these teachers, according to biographer Bharatan, ‘she absorbed the entire classical atmosphere ... but never once made the mistake of being drawn into the rigidity of classical performing’ (1995: 155) but rather began to apply what she had learned to her medium of preference, playback singing for film. Bharatan continues, ‘It was this sustained resilience of mind and spirit, by which she never got steeped in Hindustani classical modes, that helped Lata develop a performing technique’ that allowed her to ‘receptively absorb the best’ of the demands of many music directors from disparate parts of India, and find a way to please them all with her singing.

In order to do so, Lata first needed to meet them and make connections, because like anywhere else in the world, in India, too, life follows the proverb ‘it’s not what you know but who you know’. Lata had talent and versatility, but these alone are not enough to build a career on; Lata needed a network. Fortunately, she knew a composer who could help her to establish one, and that was Ghulam Haider, who reportedly first heard Lata singing to herself while she was riding on a train (Ali 2011). Haider had also

composed the music for *Khazanchi* back in 1941—this was the film associated with Lata’s singing contest win when she was only eleven years old.

Haider’s compositions for earlier films had been extremely well received, but the songs of *Khazanchi* were wildly popular. With this film, Master Ghulam Haider ‘changed the conception of the Hindustani film song. He wedded strong assertive melodic lines with an articulate beat usually derived from the store-house of pulsating, Punjabi rhythms’ (Chatterjee 1995: 55) instead of sticking really closely to Hindustani ragas as most film music composers were doing. Because his work was cutting edge, Haider was becoming influential in Bombay film culture. He was just the well-connected contact Lata needed, and fortunately for her, he ‘realized her potential and gave her a chance to sing in the film *Majboor*’ (D’Souza 1992: 73).

Besides hiring her to sing playback, Haider offered Lata advice and training. He taught her that, for film music, the lyrics of songs were of paramount importance, often carrying the storyline. He instructed Lata to enunciate carefully and to ensure clarity of expression. Haider advised her not to ‘get carried away by vocal artistry’ but to ‘concentrate on the words and also keep in mind who is going to portray the song on the screen’ (Bhimani 1995: 134). Haider understood the power of illusion-making in films, and communicated to Lata that the singer and the actor together must create a believable whole. Haider sometimes was frustrated that his colleagues in the film music industry could not appreciate the talent of the protégée that he had discovered in Lata Mangeshkar. He anticipated the future when he said ‘You are rejecting her today—but the day is not far off when producers will have to wait at her door to get her to sing for their films!’ (Ranade 2006: 403).

One problem that Lata encountered because of her move to Bombay was the language barrier. She was raised in Maharashtra as a Marathi speaker. The language

used by the motion picture industry in Bombay was Hindustani. This language is a blend of Hindi and Urdu, which are basically the same language, only written in different scripts (Hindi in Devanagari script and Urdu in Arabian script) with some vocabulary extrapolated from Farsi, English and other languages (Encyc. Britannica 2009). Dilip Kumar, a member of India's parliament since 2000, was an important actor in 1940's Bombay, and would become the winner of the first Filmfare Award for Best Actor. His opinion counted in Bombay at the time that Lata was trying to develop her career, and he was not very impressed with her, mainly because he doubted 'the Marathi speaking girl's ability to correctly pronounce Urdu' (Rajaiah 2003). Naushad Ali was the music director for a film that Dilip Kumar was starring in, and he expressed interest in using Lata Mangeshkar as a playback singer. Kumar spoke against the idea due to Lata's lack of language facility.

Lata was offended by this and 'swore that she would, one day, bring Dilip Kumar down to earth' (Bharatan 1995: 304). But he was right: she could not correctly pronounce Urdu. Film composer Datta Korgaonkar advised her, 'If you want to make a career out of singing Hindi songs, then you must be careful about pronunciation and for films, that means a mixture of Hindi and Urdu—Hindustani' (Bhimani 1995: 135). Lata was willing to learn the requisite languages, and if she needed lessons, she would find a teacher and learn correct pronunciation, because she was not afraid of work, as the research of both D'Souza (1992) and Rajaiah (2003) attests.

Lata also used her ears as a teacher; in a recent interview with Ganesh Anantharaman Lata said, 'listening to Noorjehan's songs also helped me get my Urdu diction right. The way you articulate words in a song [is] very critical to the overall effect of the song' (2008: 208). Lata's effort at language mastery was rewarded with the opportunity to sing playback in *Andaz* (1949) with Naushad as music director, and Dilip

Kumar as the male lead. Ratna Rajaiah (2003) explains that ‘when *Andaz* was released in 1949, one of its biggest hit numbers was “*Uthaye ja unke sitam*” and it was Lata Mangeshkar, though uncredited, ‘who rendered the song in flawless Urdu.’ Since that time, Lata has learned to sing in a variety of languages, most sources indicating that she has sung in twenty languages; journalist Vinod Bhardwaj puts the number of languages marginally higher at twenty-two (2003).

5.4 Partition: 1947

Lata would have been less likely to become a ‘singing queen’ without the commotion that was produced by the 1947 partition. This was an event of grave importance to all people in the Indian subcontinent, as the country was divided based on religion, creating a Muslim state in Pakistan, and a Hindu state in India. Like people in other walks of life, film directors, producers, music directors, actors and singers followed many different religions, and had to make a decision about where they would live given the new political divisions. For Lata Mangeshkar, the decision was uncomplicated. She was a practicing Hindu; she would stay in Bombay.

Among those who decided to relocate to Pakistan was singing actress Noorjehan, and her husband, film director and sometime actor Syed Shaukat Hussain Rizvi, along with their three children. Noorjehan, with her reputation for both vocal power and beauty of expression, had been kept very busy in Bombay: as a singing actress she had starred in 69 films in only five years (1942-1947), so her exodus would leave a significant gap (Anantharaman 2008: 144). Ashok Da. Ranade believes that so compelling were her performances that Noorjehan was ‘in fact a model of how to sing for cinema’ (2006: 344) which would make her pretty stiff competition for someone relatively new to the profession like Lata.

Journalist and Bollywood music authority Raju Bharatan wonders, ‘Would Lata Mangeshkar have grown to be the singing great she became if Noorjehan had stayed on in India to offer our thrush-throat cut-throat competition?’ (1995: 26). Bollywood film scholar Neepa Majumder believes that Lata very shrewdly took advantage of the confusion occasioned by partition to leverage playback technology (and herself) into a superior position (2001: 169). Scholar Gregory Booth agrees that the shift in the balance of power in the Bombay film industry which occurred at partition was significant, and counts Noorjehan’s absence as crucial to the growth of Lata Mangeshkar’s status as a singer (2008: 44). While Noorjehan continued as a singing actress once she was established in Pakistan, that country was much more insular than India was, so Noorjehan’s work did not receive much notoriety outside of Pakistan’s borders. Thus, Noorjehan ceased to be competition for Lata.

Noorjehan’s contemporary and competitor, the singing actress Suraiya (who was always bemused by her own popularity) describes herself, Noorjehan and Lata this way: ‘Noorjehan was born great, Lata achieved greatness, I had singing greatness thrust upon me’ (Bharatan 1995: 166). Though she was probably the most important singing actress of the time among those who remained in Bombay, Suraiya claimed that the singing part of her career had not been that important to her, that it was, in fact, ‘gruelling’ and was ‘best left to a specialist like Lata’ (Bharatan 1995: 170). Was this truly how it was—a voluntary stepping aside from singing on Suraiya’s part?

This attitude supported Lata’s point of view, for she said that ‘singing stars had a more difficult time than us playback singers, because they had to concentrate on both acting and singing.’ That makes some sense—doing both the acting and the singing for a shoot does make more work; but Lata followed that statement up with the somewhat surprising comment, ‘it was not physically possible to concentrate on singing after a

hard day of shooting' (Anantharaman 2008: 209). I doubt that *all* singing stars would agree—even Suraiya herself might not agree. In her case, the physically demanding aspect to her work was probably of minor importance compared to her ambivalence: Suraiya just was not sufficiently competitive to want to keep clawing her way to the top. This interpretation concurs with the view of Anantharaman, who said, 'Lata's rise as the premier playback singer too had its fallout on Suraiya's singing. With Lata around, there strictly was no need for a singing heroine' (2008: 148).

Other competitors also dropped by the wayside around the time of partition. Playback singer Zohrabai, who though Muslim chose to stay in Bombay, retired from professional singing in 1950 to focus on raising her daughter, Roshan Kumari, who would grow up to be a famous *kathak* dancer and guru (Saraogi 2010). Shamshad Begum, who had been called the first 'superstar of playback,' who had 'had producers and composers vying for her dates, willing to pay an astronomical 1000 rupees per song' between 1944 and 1949, suddenly began to 'fade away' (Anantharaman 2008: 159) singing less and less frequently during the decade of the 1950s, until she was really not heard from anymore by the 1960s. Although she neither formally retired as Zohrabai had done, nor relocated to Pakistan as Noorjehan did, this great singer who had 'never once let any music director down' appeared to be 'sidelined by one music director after another, following a line-up of hits she sang for them, on the ground that she lacked the classical base of Lata' (Bharatan 1995: 155).

A playback singer who moved in the opposite direction because of the political climate leading to partition was Geeta Dutt. Her Hindu family lived in Bengal, which became the Eastern part of Pakistan at partition, though it is Bangladesh today. Geeta's family migrated first to Calcutta and then to Bombay, where Geeta was, like Lata, discovered quite by accident by a music director—in her case, the story goes that Pandit

Hanuman Prasad was ‘walking in the street below’ and ‘heard her singing in the balcony of her flat’ (Ali 2011). Geeta managed to make many recordings as a playback singer until her death in 1972. However, she was not quite as prolific as Lata, who in an attempt to explain the reason for this difference said, ‘after I became popular in 1950, most composers gave their better songs to me. So Geeta did not have the advantage of getting the kind of compositions I got’ (Anantharaman 2008: 210).

It seems odd that composers would all be so interested in using the same voice—Lata’s—while other singers with beautiful voices were being ignored. In the words of Raju Bharatan, the composers ‘molded (sic) her to a point where they became clay in her hands’ (1995: 307)—the shift of power occasioned by partition had somehow allowed Lata influence in the film industry that she otherwise would probably not have had. Since 1947, when she had her first big break singing in *Aap Ki Seva Mein*, ‘from that moment onwards, her ascent was unstoppable. Within months, she had bought her first Hillman car. She was only 18’ (Bhardwaj 2003).

5.5 Lata’s Rising Star

In 1949, Lata Mangeshkar quickly rose to stardom because of the success of the playback singing she did for the film *Mahal*. The music for this film was composed by Khemchand Prakash with J. Nakshab as lyricist. The female lead was played by Bollywood starlet Madhubala, who was enormously popular during the forties and fifties—so much so that people outside India were aware of her.

For example, an article about Madhubala appeared in the American publication *Theatre Arts* titled ‘The Biggest Star in the World (And She’s Not in Beverly Hills).’ Madhubala was not only a great actress; she was also considered to be an incredible beauty, so singing as her playback would be like putting your voice ‘on the lips of Venus’ (Bharatan 1995: 42), definitely a plum role for the lucky playback singer who got to sing

for her. *Mahal* was a thriller with an intricate plot, and Madhubala's role in it was also complex. She played a girl, Kamini, who sometimes masquerades as a ghost, slowly driving the lead male crazy (in the literal sense).

Interestingly enough, there were actually two different singers chosen for the songs which were picturized on Madhubala in this film—singer Rajkumari sang Kamini's 'womanly maturity' in songs such as '*Mein woh dulhan hon*' and '*Yeh raat phir na aayge*' (Chatterjee 1995: 58). Lata's singing assignment was to portray Kamini's 'girlish innocence' (ibid: 58). With her ability to sing in very high ranges, in what the music director called a 'radically new falsetto voice' (Mishra 2002: 56), Lata was decided upon as the perfect choice to sing the ghostly leitmotif used to woo the poor unsuspecting young antihero of the film in the song '*Aayega Aanewala*'. Lata Mangeshkar has reminisced about the collaborative process that went into creating this song: 'he (Prakash) made me sing it again and again and, while I sang, he would alter it here, vary it there and fashion it newer and newer' (Bharatan 1995: 42).

'*Aayega Aanewala*' was a big hit, and a major turning point toward popularity in the careers of both Mangeshkar and Madhubala. Of course, it appeared to audiences of film screenings that Madhubala was the singer, since at the time playback singers were uncredited.⁵⁹ Fans who bought the 78 RPM vinyl recording (both sides needed for '*Aayega*') would also have associated the singing voice with Madhubala, because it was the practice to put the photographs and names of film stars on record labels, and not the names of the playback singers. Lata, like the character she sang for, was a ghost. However, the song '*Aayega Aanewala*' was so popular as to exceed any expectations.

⁵⁹ Bhimani (1995) also claims that Mangeshkar was unpaid for the playback in this career-altering song (232).

Bharatan (1995) relates that when it was played on *Radio Goa* it was frequently the final request of the evening program, leaving its listeners thrilled—their ‘evening would be made’ (42). By this time, playback technology had been in use for at least five years, so there must have been some *Mahal* fans who questioned whether the ethereal voice that produced ‘*Aayega*’ could really be the same voice they heard Madhubala use in the film’s dialogue. Certainly there was enough doubt that when ‘*Aayega Aanewala*’ was played on *All India Radio (AIR)*, ‘the station was inundated with fan mail wanting to know the name of the singer who sang so exquisitely’ (Rajaiah 2003).

With fans clamouring to know the name of the singer, *AIR* authorities had to approach the makers of *Mahal* to find the answer, and the Indian public first heard the name of Lata Mangeshkar. Radio stations would ‘credit her every time the song was broadcast’ (Gopal 2008: 23) and thus a star was born. Interestingly enough, as Sangita Gopal and her colleagues suggest, the star identity of Lata Mangeshkar has surpassed that of Madhubala and many of the other acting stars she would sing playback for over the course of her fifty year reign as ‘the singing queen’ of the playback era (Ranade 2006: 344).

Lata Mangeshkar’s explanation for her post-partition triumph with ‘*Aayega Aanewala*’ is based on her religious beliefs: she claims it was because of karma⁶⁰ that she prospered. ‘Success in music was ordained for me,’ she claims, ‘It had nothing to do with who came or who left the scene’ (Anantharaman 2008: 208). Partha Chatterjee, reflecting on the political milieu of the 1947 partition and its aftermath, believes that the need in the culture for examples of chastity and purity helped Lata’s career.

⁶⁰ *Hinduism, Buddhism*. Karma: action, seen as bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad, either in this life or in a reincarnation: in Hinduism one of the means of reaching Brahman. Definition from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/karma>.

Whether or not Lata was the innocent and naïve person she appeared to be, 'her voice retained its exquisite sweetness and malleability' (Chatterjee 1995:56) that suggested that she was. Lata, by singing always with gentleness and decency, seemed to be the antithesis of the violence and enmity that all too often were apparent in the subcontinent. Because her vocal tone was thin and light, listeners may even have perceived qualities of humility and almost timidity, a pleasant relief from the bold hostility they heard about on the news or experienced as a part of the partition process. Pavitra Sundar proposes that to her fans, the purity of Lata's voice was seen to equate with purity of character (2008: 148), a parallel that Lata carefully cultivated to her advantage. In a culture opposed to loudness and vulgarity in women, she represented the opposite, and her thin voice heard almost exclusively, became, according to Sundar, a metaphorical thinning of all women 'through the [limited] expressive timbre granted them through Mangeshkar's voice' (Sundar 2008: 149).

5.6 Lata in the Fifties

As Lata was slowly (whether consciously or unconsciously) building her vocal monopoly, and earning an increasingly satisfactory wage, she still received less recognition for her work than she wanted. What rankled was that playback singers were either not listed in the film credits, or were listed in a very inconspicuous way at the end of the credits. Nor was their work ever rewarded with Filmfare Awards, as the work of acting talent was.

After her success with '*Aayega Anewala*', Lata Mangeshkar was very aware of the power of the film song to motivate audiences to see a particular film, listen to a particular radio station or buy a particular soundtrack. Therefore, it was clear to her that playback singers were of great value to the film industry in Bombay, and that fans

of films also highly valued songs they heard in the movies—but that this value was not rewarded equitably.

Many publications of the time declared the worth of film songs, such as the September 9, 1952 issue of *Filmfare* magazine which discussed the extraordinary audience response to ‘*Aayega Anewala*’, and continued by saying, ‘In more than 90 out of every hundred films since produced, Lata Mangeshkar has given the playback for all feminine songs. Geeta Roy, Talat Mahmood, Shamshad, Mukesh and Lata have been as much a draw at the box office as the leading stars’ (quoted in Majumder 2001: 171). Lata believed that if singers were drawing patrons to the cinema, they were as deserving of award recognition as their acting peers.

In 1956, things were about to change. That year, the composer duo of Jaikishan and Shankar had been hired as music directors for a film to be called *Chori Chori*. These two men, Shankar Singh Raghuvanshi (25 October 1922 – 26 April 1987) from Punjab and Jaikishan Dayabhai Panchal (4 November 1929 – 12 September 1971) from Gujarat, had begun collaborating as composers with *Barsaat* in 1949. It was during their seventh year of team work that they wrote the music for *Chori Chori*, a film inspired by the Hollywood movie *It Happened One Night*.

Like most movies made in Bombay (they were not yet calling these films Bollywood movies) this one ran through a gamut of emotions, and required the composers to write a full range of songs, from fast and happy to slow and soothing to touchingly poignant—a total of nine songs. Eight of these songs would be picturized on Nargis, who was a popular and accomplished actress with ‘range, style, grace and an incredibly warm screen presence’ (Sen 2011)—Nargis would go on to win the Filmfare Best Actress Award in 1957 for *Mother India*. The playback singer chosen to render the singing voice of Nargis’s character, Kammo, was Lata Mangeshkar.

The song '*Rasik Balma*' was a touching love song. When Nargis would act to the playback, she is said to have been so moved by the pathos of Lata's rendition that she needed no artificial aid to produce tears during filming. Of this song, it has been said 'Lata Mangeshkar ... leaves her stamp on the film with perhaps her greatest sad song ever—'*Rasik Balma*'. It is perhaps technically the best composition of the film and the emotion and pathos with which Lata renders this song is unbelievable. Only such a gifted singer could give such expression to words' (Bali 2010).

Fans and critics were also very impressed with *Rasik Balma*, and it won in the Best Song Category of that year's Filmfare Awards. The elated composers invited playback singer Lata Mangeshkar to perform the song live at the awards ceremony. To some singers, to be asked to perform at such a highly respected event would have looked like a golden opportunity. To Lata, it looked like a different sort of opportunity. She refused to sing, citing the unfairness that while there were awards for the song writers, and for the actors upon whom the songs were picturized, there were no awards for the lyricists who contributed words, or for the singers who gave their vocal talents to the rendition, and without whom the song might not be an award-winner (Rajaiah 2003). Her refusal to cooperate drew attention to and garnered publicity for injustices that Lata felt needed attention.

Lata continued to lobby for change while she also continued to be given a lot of vocal work to do. In 1957, she was happy to be offered the opportunity to sing playback for a very "big star" of Bombay cinema: Vyjayanthimala in a film called *Madhumati*. Vyjayanthimala Bali, born August 13, 1936, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, was an Indian actress and classical dancer. She began her career at age five, and by 1955 had been nominated for the Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress in *Devdas* (Anantharaman 2008: 163).

After retiring from acting, Vyjayanthimala became a politician and served as a Member of Parliament in India. But in 1957, she was a very hot box office commodity, and for Lata to be able to pair her voice with Vyjayanthimala's acting would be a great achievement. The film *Madhumati* was a ghost-story, akin to Hitchcock's *Rebecca* or *Vertigo*, with the theme of reincarnation (Mishra 2002: 49-57).

While horror is not a genre that would be likely to have songs in Hollywood, given the traditions of the Bombay film industry there were in fact eight songs in this horror film, including the haunting '*Aa ja re pardesi*' which was picturized on Vyjayanthimala, who plays multiple roles (of several persons alive, dead or reincarnated) and in this particular song portrays the daughter of a village chieftain whose appearance in the scene is very ghostly. The spooky portrayal of the song sequence coupled with the haunting quality of Lata Mangeshkar's voice made it very effective and memorable, and its picturization was probably a factor in Vyjayanthimala's best actress nomination for this film. Her nomination was only one of many for this film: *Madhubala* actually swept the awards in almost every category.

According to Ganesh Anantharaman, when the Filmfare Awards for 1958 were announced, there was a new category for Best Playback Singer, and the winner of that award was Lata Mangeshkar herself, for '*Aa ja re pardesi*' (2008: 154). Again Lata was one of the nominees for the 1959 award, for '*Bhaiya mere*' from *Chhoti Bahen*, but the winner was one of her male colleagues, Mukesh, for his rendition of '*Sab Kuchh Seeka Humne*' from the film *Anari*. While Lata may have been happy for the recognition that Mukesh received—he had been working as a singer just as long as Lata had—she may have also been irritated that there was no reward for her own outstanding work.

Lata was always very sure of her own singing genius; she has been called shrewd and even 'ruthlessly manipulative' (Bharatan 1995: 63) in her quest to further her own

career. However, she has always looked out for the film industry as a whole, and playback singers in particular. If she cared only about her own success, then her receipt of a Filmfare Award may have satisfied her, and if one did not, surely she would have been satisfied as she continued to win or be nominated (often twice per year) for the award in subsequent years. However, Lata became increasingly annoyed that there was only one Filmfare Award for singers, while there were awards for both *male* and *female* best actors and for both *male* and *female* supporting actors; Lata believed the same number of awards should be available for singers.

Among her singing peers in this decade were Mukesh, Mohammed Rafi, and Kishore Kumar, each with their own way of rendering their male roles (Majumder 2001: 172). She, as a female, did not think that these male singers should have to compete against her, nor she against them. Lata quietly but extremely emphatically used her considerable 'pull' in the industry 'to institute a separate award for male playback singers' (Anantharaman 2008: 154) which would honour the work of these gentlemen. Looking at it from another angle, the angle that Lata Mangeshkar was nothing if not astute and calculating, she must have also realized that with only one category for all song renditions, the possibility of having a female winner each year was diluted, and thus *her* chances were better if there were two awards.

5.7 Lata in the Sixties

Ganesh Anantharaman relates the story of what happened when composer Jaidev was working on the music for the film *Hum Dono*, which was released in 1961. Among the songs he composed for this film was a bhajan—a devotional song—called "*Allah Tero Naam, Ishwar Tero Naam*". This translates as "Allah is your name, Ishwar is your name" and continues with "Bless everyone with wisdom O God."

This song's message of unity would have had special appeal to Indians who had been through the anguish of a religious partition, since it uses the Arabic word for God, *Allah*, as well as the Sanskrit word for God, *Ishwar*—appealing to both Muslims and Hindus. In an effort to enhance the religiosity of the song, Jaidev had thought to invite a classical singer of devotional music to render the song, rather than using a singer of commercial music such as a playback singer. Lata heard about this somehow, and sent a 'discreet word' to Jaidev.

What she said is a mystery, but it worked, and Lata was signed for this song. "*Allah Tero Naam, Ishwar Tero Naam*" as presented by Lata gives listeners a sense of the divine, according to Anantharaman, who says, 'it sounds transcendental, making you believe no one (but Lata) ... could have brought you as close to the sublime in yourself' (2008: 155). Lata enjoyed singing this evocative and mystical bhajan very much, and it 'remains one of her all-time favourites. It is a number that Lataji proudly renders at all her concerts' (Khan 2012). Of herself, Lata has said, 'If I do have that spiritual quality to my singing, it is because I am a god-fearing person, and I have never forgotten that it is His blessings that have given me so much' (Anantharaman 2008: 210). But Lata did not rely on God's blessings alone to bring singing contracts her way; she worked for what she wanted, and doggedly pursued opportunities that were especially appealing to her, as this one was.

Anantharaman suggests that the episode with "*Allah Tero Naam, Ishwar Tero Naam*" shows that Lata Mangeshkar was 'not beyond feeling a sense of threat and acting on it, despite her twelve years at the top' (2008:155). Though she was the most requested playback singer at this point in time, she could not let a song that she knew would be outstandingly popular slip away from her, even if she had to pressure the music director into choosing her to sing it, as she did with Jaidev in this instance.

As a top playback singer, Lata had a lot of power in the film industry. It seemed to some that all Lata had to do was ‘wave a stick’ and film production people would do whatever she requested (Bharatan 1995: 161). One music director was a little frustrated by Lata’s high opinion of herself; Laximant complained that as her success grew throughout the decade, by the end of the sixties, he ‘never knew if she would turn up to record’ (Bharatan 1995: 373). More and more, she was calling the shots.

Since the institution of Filmfare Awards for playback singers, Lata had of course paid close attention to the annual outcomes, and doubtless would have liked to see many awards coming her way, but this was not something she could control; Filmfare Awards are based on votes coming from industry insiders and also from the listening public, and no one can control the millions of potential voters among the audience. Although Lata only won the award three times in the decade, she was nominated for a total of fifteen songs. Only one year saw her with no nominations. Lata’s Filmfare Awards and nominations are recorded on the chart that follows⁶¹. Note that the awards ceremony takes place in the spring of the next calendar year. The year the movie was made is followed with the year the awards were extended in parentheses. The chart also shows that during the first seven years of the decade, when only one playback award was given, male singers were more likely to win than female singers.

| Lata Mangeshkar’s Filmfare Record 1960-1969 | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| Movie Year (Award Year) | Lata’s Nominations | Winner |
| 1960 (1961) Lata receives two nominations | “Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai” from <i>Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai</i> "Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya" from <i>Mughal-e-Azam</i> | Male singer: Mohammad Rafi |
| 1961 (1962) | Lata was not nominated. | Male singer: Mohammad Rafi |

⁶¹ See www.filmfare.com for a complete listing of Filmfare Award winners from 1954 to the present.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1962 (1963) Lata receives two nominations; one wins. | "Aapki Nazrone Samajha" from <u>Anpadh</u> | Lata for: "Kahin Deep Jale Kahin Dil" from <u>Bees Saal Baad</u> |
| 1963 (1964) | "Jo Waada Kiya" from <u>Taj Mahal</u> | Male singer: Mahendra Kapoor |
| 1964 (1965) | "Jyot Se Jyot Jagate Chalo" from <u>Sant Gyaneshwar</u> | Male singer: Mohammad Rafi |
| 1965 (1966) Lata receives two nominations; one wins. | "Ek Tu Na Mila" from <u>Himalaya Ki God Mein</u> | Lata for: "Tumhi Mere Mandir" from <u>Khandan</u> |
| 1966 (1967) Lata receives two nominations | "Kaanto Se Kheech" from <u>Guide</u> "Lo Aagi Unki Yaad" from <u>Do Badan</u> | Male singer: Mohammad Rafi |
| Filmfare Awards for Both Male and Female Categories instituted: | | |
| 1967 (1968) Lata receives two nominations | "Baharon Mera Jeevan" from <u>Aakhri Khat</u> "Saawan Ka Mahina" from <u>Milan</u> | Asha Bhosle: "Garibon Ki Suno" from <u>Dus Lakh</u> |
| 1968 (1969) | "Milti Hai Zindagi Mein" from <u>Aankhen</u> | Asha Bhosle: "Parde Mein Rehne Do" from <u>Shikar</u> |
| 1969 (1970) Lata receives two nominations; one wins. | "Kaise Rahu Chup" from <u>Intaquam</u> | Lata for: "Aap Mujhe Achche Lagne Lage" from <u>Jeene Ki Raah</u> |

It took some time for it to happen, but in 1968, it was finally announced that there would be two playback awards, as Lata had hoped and lobbied for. That year, although Lata was once again nominated, her sister Asha Bhosle won the female award, and Mohammed Rafi won the male award.

Lata's last Filmfare award was in 1969, for "Aap mujhe achche lagne lage" from *Jeene Ki Raah*, after which 'she made the unprecedented gesture of renouncing Filmfare awards in favour of fresh talent, except for a Lifetime award' (Bhimani 1995: 324). This sounds very altruistic, but may also have been a calculated professional move. Bharatan explains it this way: 'Give Lata credit for the fact that, immediately after this, she saw the Best Singer Award for Sharda coming. And to lose out to a vocal charlatan like

Sharda would have been the ultimate insult. So Lata anticipated the insult and deftly sidestepped it' (Bharatan 1995: 149).⁶²

Whatever her true motivation was, the woman whose voice is considered to be 'ideal' and 'standard'—as in the standard to which all singers who follow her aspire—the most famous singer in all of Indian history, whose voice 'stands for the hopes, dreams and ideals of 900 million citizens' (Sundar 2008: 145, 150) did in fact take herself out of competition for the award.

Filmfare Awards, however, are only one method of measuring greatness. The stature of the audience for whom you sing is another important factor, and on 27 June, 1963, Lata was privileged to sing for the Prime Minister of her country, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other officials. The occasion was a somber one; dignitaries were gathered to pay their respects to those servicemen who had lost their lives in defence of India during the war with the Chinese (the Sino-Indian War or Sino-Indian Border Conflict) which had occurred in 1962. Lata Khubchandani describes how Lata Mangeshkar's interpretation of "*Aye Mere Watan Ke Logo*"—in English, "Oh, People of My Country"—brought the Prime Minister to tears (2003: 486-487).

In 1969, Lata had been singing playback as a professional for 27 years, and had been wildly popular with audiences and music directors for at least twenty. Lata's success in her field was marked that year by her receiving one of the highest honours that can be accorded to an Indian: the Padma Bhushan. The Padma Awards, instituted in 1954, are a group of three awards that recognize Indian nationals for 'distinguished and exceptional achievements/service in all fields of activities/disciplines'⁶³.

⁶² It is believed that the polls were rigged due to Sharda's hold on Shankar of the Shankar-Jaikishan duo. See: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1060428/asp/etc/story_6143844.asp Grover 2006.

⁶³ Details available at government site: <http://www.mha.nic.in/pdfs/Scheme-PDAWD.pdf>

The Padma Shri is awarded for ‘distinguished service, while the Padma Bhushan is for ‘distinguished service of a high order.’ The highest Padma Award, the Padma Vibhushan is for ‘exceptional and distinguished service.’ Lata felt honoured to have been awarded the Padma Bhushan, the second best of the three Padmas. In the fifteen years since the Padma Awards had been granted, many classical musicians and Bharatanatyan dancers, music teachers, actors and visual artists had won, but only once before had a playback singer been awarded the Padma Bhushan: Madras Lalitangi Vasanthakumari, popularly known as MLV, had won in 1967. But she was also a carnatic⁶⁴ singer, whereas Lata had made her mark solely with playback singing. Some people thought Lata should have stopped while she was ahead, and retired from playback singing after winning this prestigious award, an opinion that has been voiced by Raju Bharatan (1995: 367). Other people agreed with the assessment of Ganesh Anantharaman, who has said that ‘Lata, even at less than 100 percent, was better than all others” (2008: 155). The voice of India was not yet ready to stop singing—she was still young, at only forty years old, and was ready to take on whatever challenges came her way.

5.8 Lata and the Battle for Royalties

It is good to be paid for the work that you do; it is nice to receive credit for the work that you do; it is satisfying to receive awards that recognize the work that you do; but it is very difficult to sit back and watch other people pad their pockets with earnings for the work that you did in the past. That was the situation for playback singers up to the decade of the sixties, when record companies began to issue compilation records based on past film music performances.

⁶⁴ Carnatic music is the classical music of South India. Singers who follow this traditional style use hand motions to emphasize the beats in the music as they sing.

Lata found it unfair that singers were only receiving 2½ % royalties, while the bulk of 'residual profits only go to the recording company, the producer, and in some cases, the composer' (Bhimani 1995: 194), especially since she knew that many playback singers were without work and some were in dire financial circumstances. Bhimani explains that Lata felt that increased royalty rights would ensure that retired playback singers would have income in their old age and not have to rely on charity (ibid: 195). Lata was the first playback singer to go to the bargaining table demanding 'a share in the royalties to film songs, instead of a flat fee for each song' (Majumder 2001: 176).

Not all playback singers agreed with Lata's point of view, and, as a group, they were not able to show a united front. Lata felt that it was important to get the support of Mohammed Rafi, the most important male playback singer of the time; if he was with her, their individual spheres of influence would be united, other singers would support their cause, and they would be stronger in their quest. However, Rafi did not agree with Lata. He held the opinion that singing for film is work-for-hire, and that once the singing is finished, the playback singer's connection to the film is over.

Rafi's position in the film industry was not inconsequential, therefore, 'so long as Rafi, as a matching singing titan, held this view, nobody in the industry was prepared to buy Lata's idea that it was the singer's voice that ... took the tune to the masses, so that the playback artist was entitled to the same share of royalty' (Bharatan 1995: 194). Lata, in turn, felt that Rafi 'and others like him either did not understand their rights, or were afraid to fight the system' (Bhimani 1995: 194). So strongly did Rafi and Mangeshkar disagree on this issue that it caused a rift in their friendship that would last for ten years (Rajaiah 2003).

Had Rafi supported Lata's royalties quest, she may have been successful in pressuring film producers to see things her way—she had some composers, such as Salil Chowdhury on her side—and Rafi's influence may have tipped the scales. Ironically for Rafi, despite his siding with the more influential producers and music directors on this issue, the 'industry ditched the same Rafi after 1969' (Rediff News 2006)—not that he no longer sang, but his standing in the industry was weakened and he earned fewer awards.

Mohammad Rafi had stood solidly behind film producer Raj Kapoor while he was at odds with Lata on the royalty issue. Kapoor saw the singer as only an interpreter, and not a creator. He did not even think that singers needed to be paid 2½ % royalties, telling Lata that 'she had no responsibility for the success of the song, once she finished rendering it' (Bharatan 1995: 108). Lata argued back that 'if the singer contributed significantly to the ultimate saleability of the song, she should be duly rewarded' (Bhimani 1995: 192). The battle for royalties ended up being a solitary and not particularly successful battle for Lata.

In an article in *The Hindu*, Ratna Rajaiah (2003) suggests that Lata's 'unflagging and lonely crusade' should have led to better rights for the playback singers of today, but it is questionable that her royalties campaign helped anyone but herself in the long run. Bhimani states that in the entire film industry of Bollywood today, 'O.P. Nayyar and Lata Mangehskar are the only two artistes who charge royalty in addition to their professional fee' (1995: 191).

Further, in Anjana Rajan's 2008 interview with four-time Filmfare Award-winning playback singer Kavita Krishnamurthy in *The Hindu*, Krishnamurthy states frankly that royalties are a lost cause. 'As a singer, you don't get any royalty. Even if you sing on stage (one of your own previously recorded playback numbers) you start getting

calls asking you to pay a percentage of the amount you were paid, as royalty to the recording company!' (2008). Not only royalties, but also receiving credit for songs sung is once again an issue—almost like all the lobbying to receive credit that Lata and others did in the fifties has apparently been in vain.

Playback singer Sujatha Mohan has noticed that 'Even in the film credits, our names scroll down towards the end, and sometimes the operator even switches off the reel' (Gautam 2006) so that the public who attend the film may not be aware of who was singing the playback. Lata, although less active as a playback singer in her old age, is still an activist in the fight for both credit and royalties for her colleagues in the industry. As recently as September 2009, she has been involved with a group called Performers Syndicate Limited, led ironically enough by Mohammed Rafi's son Shahid Rafi, who are uniting to demand that royalties be extended to singers as well as lyricists and composers, all who have lost potential residual income to film production and recording companies. While Lata has been aware of this issue for decades, it is the heirs of her contemporaries who now are fighting for the royalties that their parents did not recognize as important in years past (Iyer 2009).

5.9 Lata in the Seventies

During the seventies, Lata Mangeshkar could be heard singing for films of which Laxmikant-Pyarelal were the music directors. This duo of composers, Laxmikant Shantaram Kudalkar and Pyarelal Ramprasad Sharma, had a long professional relationship with Lata. When Laxmikant was ten years old, in 1947—the year of partition, just as Lata's career was taking off—he played the mandolin in a concert of Lata's, and she was impressed with his playing and took the opportunity to befriend the young boy.

Later, he met his future partner Pyarelal while attending a music school run by the Mangeshkar family, *Sureel Kala Kendra*. Lastly, it was through Lata's intercession that the duo met great Bollywood composers like Naushad and Sachin Dev Burman who initially hired the pair as set musicians. Later, as they hung around the studio and let their songs be heard, they got their start as film composers (Mumbai 2011). The duo knew that Lata orchestrated opportunities for them, and they reciprocated by providing singing contracts for her.

The seventies found Lata singing many songs composed by Rahul Dev Burman (R. D. Burman), the son of her good friend Sachin Dev Burman. The songs that R. D. composed for the 1972 film *Parichay*, and which Lata sang, were judged sufficiently fine for Lata to be nominated for and win the National Film Award Silver Lotus for her work as a playback singer. Unlike the Filmfare Awards, the National Awards are given by the government of India, rather than by the film industry. They cover the films produced in India as a whole, in the many and various regional languages; not just Hindi language films, as the Filmfare Awards do. The competition is therefore greater, and this award was a great honour for Lata to receive⁶⁵, bringing her singing to the attention of other language groups within her own country. She won this important award again in 1975, for her playback of the song '*Roothe Roothe Piya*' in the Hindi language film *Kora Kagaz* with music by Kalyanji Anandji.

Lata's fame had become legendary in India, and during the seventies she also began to seek fame abroad. She was known throughout the Indian diaspora for her playback singing; she now began to concertize throughout the world, allowing many of her worldwide fans to be able to connect her name, her face, her trademark plain white

⁶⁵ See <http://iffi.nic.in/Dff2011/Frm20thNFAAward.aspx?PdfName=20NFA.pdf> for access to a PDF of the official program of the awards ceremony at which Lata received her award.

saris, with her singular voice. Her first overseas concert took place in March 1974 at the Royal Albert Hall in London. This charity event played to sold out audiences for three evening performances (Welch 1974: 52). Lata was likely the first Asian artist to perform a solo concert in this venue, though Ravi Shankar played there later the same year. News that Lata Mangeshkar would be making her 'first appearance outside India' travelled as far as Chicago, where her upcoming concert in London was noted in the *Suburbanite Economist* in January of 1974 (Short 1974: 3:2).

After her success at the Royal Albert, Lata made other concert tours, such as the 1976 tour which took her to Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver in Canada; and to Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, Detroit, Washington D.C. and Houston. The *Christian Science Monitor* described her as possessing 'a style that is persuasive and compelling beyond any cultural parameters' and goes on to describe her work in film music, crediting her with singing for '70 percent of Indian film music' (Venturelli 1976: 27). Ticket holders to those concerts paid \$50.00 for entrance, a rather stiff price for 1976.

5.10 Lata in the Eighties

The eighties was a busy decade for Lata. Though she was fifty years old at the start of the decade, according to the listing on *Internet Movie Database*, she was engaged to sing for 210 Hindi language films between 1980 and 1989. Lata was also getting plenty of attention from outside her own country. Her popularity with Indian expatriates in South America was made apparent in 1980, when she was given the Key to the City of Georgetown in Guyana, and also made an honorary citizen of the country of Suriname (Dhiman 2000).

In 1985, the city of Toronto, Canada welcomed Lata back for her third performance there, and named June 9 "Asia Day" in her honor. When she arrived at

Pearson International Airport, she was greeted by ‘hundreds of fans’ who ‘demonstrated how much the people of India love this tiny woman with the voice “as towering as the Himalayas,” ‘(Cheney 1985: B01) and was welcomed to Toronto by the mayor Art Eggleton, Nadia Potts of the National Ballet of Canada, and the chairman of United Way, Janet MacInnis, whose organization Lata was there to support in a sell-out benefit concert that would raise \$150,000. Lata told dignitaries and fans, ‘I love music so much that I don't feel I am working when I sing’ (ibid: B01). This was an interesting moment in fundraising history, since for the first time an artist from the Third World was staging a benefit concert for a First World charity organization.

1986 was the first year that Lata took philanthropic singing home to India, participating for the first time at a charity event in Bombay. Benefit organizers were pleased that ‘four top playback singers took part, namely Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar, Asha Bhosle and Mahendra Kapoor’ (India West 1987: 34). 30,000 fans watched an eight-hour show, with all proceeds going to the Film Industry Welfare Trust which was ‘established to help the needy persons in the film industry and for other emergencies and welfare activities’ (ibid: 34).

During this decade the State Government of Madhya Pradesh, the state of Lata’s birth, instituted the Lata Mangeshkar Award in honour of her ‘extraordinary talent and her services to the field of music’ (Kumar 2000). The prize was originally of 1.00 lakh, though it has since been raised to 2.00 lakhs⁶⁶, and was designated for either a music director or a playback singer in the field of light music. Film composer Naushad Ali was the first recipient of this award in 1984. Others receiving the award in the decade included playback singer and Bollywood actor Kishore Kumar (1985); Jaidev, the

⁶⁶ 1 lakh is approximately \$2000 to \$2500 in United States dollars.

composer whose song Lata had commandeered in 1961, won the award bearing her name in 1986; playback singer Manna Dey (1987); film composer Mohammed Zahur Khayyam Hashmi, known best as simply Khayyam (1988); and Lata's own younger sister, playback singer Asha Bhosle (1989).

In addition to having her name on an award that others could win, Lata won an award of great significance herself at the close of the decade in 1989: she was the recipient of that year's Dada Saheb Phalke Award. This award was named for the man considered to be the Father of Indian Cinema, and was instituted in 1969, one hundred years from the date of Phalke's birth. It is the highest award the Government of India gives to those in the film industry, awarded for lifetime contribution to their field. The award most often goes to directors, producers or music directors; less frequently, to actors or even cinematographers. Lata was the first playback singer to be so recognized, and in fact, only two other playback singers have ever received this award: Lata's sister Asha Bhosle was also a recipient of the Dada Saheb Phalke Award in 2000, and Manna Dey in 2007.

5.11 Lata in the Nineties

Lata, between age sixty and seventy, was starting to slow down in her playback singing, contributing to only 64 films throughout the decade. Though she had exempted herself from Filmfare Awards since 1969, the music directors she worked with were award winners for the songs that she rendered during this decade, such as Raam Laxman for 1990's *Maine Pyar Kiya*; R. D. Burman for 1995's *1942: A Love Story*; Uttam Singh for 1998's *Dil To Pagal Hai*; and A. R. Rahman for 1999's *Dil Se*. Her voice also contributed to 1995's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, which was voted the best film of

1995, and which has had the longest theatrical run of any Hindi language film in history, and is one of the top grossing Bollywood films worldwide⁶⁷.

According to biographer Harish Bhimani, Lata was aware that if many composers clamoured to use her voice, she could afford to pick and choose only those playback contracts that most appealed to her. 'Cancelling a recording may mean little more to Lata than a muted refusal in reply to an agitated phone call. But, for the music director who is biting his nails over the future of the song or for the producer whose schedule crumbles, it is quite another story!' (Bhimani 1995: 19).

In 1990, Lata turned movie producer for *Lekin*, which means 'but' in English. This film was directed by Gulzar whose customary role as a lyricist was also made use of in this film's songs, with music composed by Lata's brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar. *Lekin* was a critical success, netting Gulzar winnings as best lyricist at both the Filmfare Awards and the National Film Awards ceremonies. Lata won her third National Film Award for Best Playback Singer in 1991 with the song "*Yara Seeli Seeli*" from this film⁶⁸.

5.12 Lata in the New Millennium

2001 was a landmark year for Lata Mangeshkar for several reasons. This was the year that she received the Bharat Ratna, or Jewel of India, the highest civilian award granted by the government of India 'for performance of highest order in any field of human endeavour' (Govt 2011). Lata was honoured on March 21 of 2001 at an awards ceremony in New Delhi, where in addition to her reception of the Bharat Ratna, 54 other individuals were given Padma Awards. 'The award was presented to the melody queen by the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, in the Durbar Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan' the

⁶⁷ <http://www.boxofficeindia.com/showProd.php?itemCat=312&catName=TGlmZXRpbWU=>.

⁶⁸ See <http://iffi.nic.in/Dff2011/Frm20thNFAAward.aspx?PdfName=20NFA.pdf> for access to a PDF of the official program of the awards ceremony at which Lata received her award.

staff reporter for *The Hindu* writes (2001). Lata was the first singer to have ever received this award since its inception in 1954; though another singer, Bhimsen Joshi, would receive this honor in 2008.

Lata did not have as many playback assignments as in the past, contributing to only 24 films between 2000 and 2011. Many of the films to which she loaned her voice were extremely successful. One of these was the 2004 release of the Yash Chopra production *Veer-Zaara*. This film is unique among recent offerings in that the music used in it is by a long-dead composer, Madan Mohan, an old friend of Lata's. Yash Chopra wanted music with an older sound, and without the westernization that is apparent in the music of many current films in Bollywood. He approached many music directors, but none were able to furnish the kind of music he required. Then his company CEO, Sanjeev Kohli, suggested that his own deceased father, Madan Mohan, had left recordings of many songs that had not been used in films during his lifetime. Kohli suggested that they listen to the recordings, and see if any songs were the right sound and feel for this movie. This they did, and selected 35 songs which then were pared down to eleven.

For this music, 'Madan Mohan was posthumously honoured with the best music director award for *Veer-Zaara*' at the 2004 Samsung International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards ceremony in the Netherlands (Muthalaly 2005). Yash Chopra returned to directing this film after a hiatus of several years. Because Lata Mangeshkar had given playback support in all his films, beginning with his first film *Dhool Ka Phool* in 1959, he wished to use her voice in *Veer Zaara*.

Chopra said, 'I am fortunate that she has been kind enough to sing for my films. The relationship has been built for over 40 years and now when I was trying to create history by reviving Madan Mohan's music 30 years after his untimely death, how can

she not be there' (Kalla 2004). Lata's light, floating voice was used to give a mystic feel to the songs, especially the haunting '*Tere Liye*'.

As I was watching the film, it was a bit odd to juxtapose the voice that I recognized as Lata's with Preity Zinta's face—Preity was born in 1975, 46 years after Lata. While it is true that Preity's character, Zaara, ages during the course of the film, she only ages twenty years. Perhaps it only bothered me because I knew that Lata was 75 years old, at least 25 to 30 years older than the character she was singing for. I suppose this should be no more disconcerting than it was for Lata to sing for Dimple Kapadia in 1972's *Bobby*, when Lata was 43 and Dimple was 13, playing a 16 year old character (Anantharaman 2008: 156). The age difference is about the same; and it is a bit jarring to the illusion the film is trying to create, if the listener stops and thinks about it. But perhaps it does not matter to the Indian audience member, who has been listening to Lata's voice for a lifetime, picturized on a variety of faces and ages. Perhaps they agree with director Sanjay Leela Bhansali, who has said, 'It doesn't matter if she no longer sounds as she did ten years ago. At her age, it's a miracle she can still sing. Lataji has long ago transcended human definitions of excellence' (Jha 2009).

5.13 Lata's Unique Voice: God's Gift

When Ganesh Anantharaman had the opportunity to interview Lata Mangeshkar in 2008, they spoke of early playback artiste K. L. Saigal, whose death occurred in 1947, just as Lata's star was in its ascendancy. Lata had great respect for Saigal and believed that his profound success as a singer was based upon certain qualities that he possessed: his god-given voice; his three octave range; his understanding of music; the ability to sing expressively for a variety of situations; clear diction; and last of all, that his calling as a film singer was ordained by God, that he had been blessed to have that outcome with his life (Anantharaman 2008: 208). I think that when Lata gave this

appraisal of Saigal, she was also putting into words her unconscious opinion of her own voice and situation as a successful singing star. Every quality that she ascribes to Saigal is something that has been said of her voice by either Lata herself or someone else in the film industry.

Lata spoke of Saigal's god-given voice: she felt the same way about her own voice. The leaflet printed to promote her 1995 concert in Toronto said, 'The voice was God's gift to her; what she made of it was her gift to God' (Crew 1995: H6). Religion has always played an important role in Lata's life; she has always included worship of and acknowledgment of a Supreme Being in her daily habits.

Even her choice about where to live reflects this devotion, giving her proximity to a temple that is associated with the *Devi Mahatmya* writings of the *Purana*, the secondary group of Hindu scriptures. It is reported that 'She begins the day by praying at the Mahalaxmi Temple situated right across from her home in Prabhu Kunj' (RnM 2008). Whatever happens in Lata's life, whether it is singing a song, giving a concert, or receiving an honour, she acknowledges the good things that come to her as the beneficence of deity. Upon being honoured by the government of France, Lata said, 'I don't know why God continues to shower his largesse on me when I've reached an age when I've received more love and honour than any human deserves' (Patel 2009). God is omnipresent in Lata's consciousness, and to God she ascribes her talent.

Lata spoke of Saigal's astounding range. The composer Anil Biswas felt the same way about Lata's range. He said, 'With Lata there, there was absolutely no limitation placed on my composing range. Such was Lata's vocal reach that I could explore the complex reaches of composition in the knowledge that Lata would take it in her stride' (Bharatan 1995: 207). He could write whatever he felt inspired to, knowing that Lata had the ability to move freely through a wide range of pitches. Lata collaborated with

Biswas on 29 films between 1949 and 1965, at which time he retired from the film industry. In total, Lata sang 120 film songs composed by Biswas, of which 88 were solos and 32 were duets. Jerry D'Souza, writing about Lata for Billboard, said, "Though at first she created an impact because of her range, Mangeshkar's ability to craft feeling into every nuance grew stronger over the years' (1992: 73). Vocal range was important, but so was the musical understanding that resulted in being able to express a range of emotions.

This quality, too, Lata developed in her singing. Another composer, Salil Chowdhury, affectionately called Salilda by his fans, said that he was 'in inspirational love with the voice of Lata Mangeshkar ... she alone had the range and expression to interpret my composition in all its subtlety and integrity of note' (Bharatan 1995: 230). Chowdhury chose to use Lata's voice not only for films he composed for in the Hindi language, but also in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Bengali.

Gautam Choudhury writes this of the collaboration between Salilda and Lata on Bengali songs: 'Bengalees were thrilled to get Lata singing Bengali songs with practically flawless accent. She became one of them and the wonderful songs Salil composed for Lata during the next three decades still remain possibly the most melodic and lyrical Bengali modern songs' (2011).

Earlier in this paper, I referred to Lata's willingness to learn Urdu in order to improve her expression in that language (D'Souza 1992:73); here we have evidence that she also worked on Bengali. About Lata's singing in the highly regarded Hindi language film *Hum Aapke Hain Koun!* (1994) it has been said that she 'brings a unique style of intonation and vocal representation' (Dudrah 2006: 57). It is clear that Lata valued the ability to render the appropriate expression for a song regardless of the language it was sung in. When interviewed by Harish Bhimani, he asked her how she could maintain her

ability to emote expressively in her singing—wouldn't recording day after day turn it all into just another routine? Surely, he felt, it would not be possible to feel inspired in one's singing every day. Lata replied, 'it affects me with the same intensity everyday. And music to me is no less than worship and as far as that "something" happening to me is concerned, I guess, by force of habit, the process of emoting might be happening mechanically, as it were. But for the duration of the take, I'm totally immersed in the song' (Bhimani 1995: 151-152).

The ability to move an audience through song, regardless of language, was a gift that Lata cultivated and improved on throughout her long career. Just as her voice was a gift from God, so too was the gift of language and expression, to Lata's way of thinking. Composer Naushad penned a poem for Lata in which he said, 'What is most astonishing is that / Even God lends you his ear' (Bhimani 1995: 16). Perhaps this was a part of Lata's destiny because she traces her genealogical roots back to the *devadasi*, 'a religious practice that consists of the votive offering of girls to the deities in Hindu temples' (Torri 2009: 33, 36) where the girls are ordained to serve the Goddess *Yellama*, the goddess of abundance and strength, and to serve their communities as dancers and singers. Ordination to singing was, as it were, in Lata's blood. Her parents taught her devotion to God in all aspects of her life, including the use of her vocal talent, and this has remained clear to her throughout her life.

Lata Mangeshkar recently said, 'When I sing I never wear shoes—my father believed singing was like entering a temple of Goddess Saraswati. Singing is like prayer to me' (Kabir 2009). Decisions she has made as she has followed her chosen career path have always been made a matter of prayer. She told Harish Bhimani that, 'when playback assignments started coming my way regularly, I bid my last 'salaam' to acting and thanked God with folded hands' (Bhimani 1995: 92). Perhaps Lata's manifest

degree of devotion to God explains why some people who know her call her a goddess, or describe her as being next to God.

5.14 Lata and Monopoly

No discussion of Lata Mangeshkar's career would be complete without addressing the question of monopoly. As I asked in the opening section of the chapter, which is true of Lata—was she chosen to sing in so many films because she really was 'the best'; or was she shrewd and calculating, deliberately keeping herself at the top? I am sure there is no definite answer, and probably both points of view contain some truth.

Neepa Majumder comes down on the side of monopoly. She sees that the fact that there were so few voices heard came to 'constitute a defining feature of the aura of playback' (2001: 171) and that it was purposefully 'engineered by shrewd individuals such as Lata Mangeshkar' who took advantage of the 1947 partition and all the upheaval it created to seize control of some conventions of the film industry, one of which was playback (ibid: 169).

Harish Bhimani seems confused by the question and is not sure where to cast his vote—accusations of monopoly against Lata, he argues, 'must have stemmed from her unprecedented success and the alleged privileges that go with it' (1995: 153). So, it may look like a monopoly, but it was not Lata's fault; it was only the fault of her success. He quotes a journalist in Trinidad who asked, 'How true is this alleged monopoly of Lata Mangeshkar?' and then answered his own question, because Bhimani could not, with 'It does not seem possible that, in all these years, not a single female singer has been able to take her place' (Bhimani 1995: 150). Indeed, it does not seem possible that in a country with millions of people, in a country like India where music is ubiquitous, the voice of only one woman would come to be so revered for such a long period of time.

Peter Manuel notes that India's illiteracy rate was 65%, and few Indians could afford to purchase television sets or radios, so the more affordable cinema tickets and travelling screen shows were the medium that most Indian people relied on for their entertainment (Manuel 1993: 41). Since Lata's voice was heard in film after film, year after year, by several generations of people, would people come to think of her voice as what a female singer should sound like because it was heard so much? Or conversely, was her voice used so frequently because that is what the people wanted to hear? Peter Manuel suggests that film producers could 'exercise extensive and unprecedented control of the means of artistic production, enabling them to manipulate media content and, to an extent, public taste' (Manuel 1993: 14). If Manuel is correct, whether control was exerted by the producers themselves or through Lata's machinations, it would follow that those voices which people heard most frequently would become their taste, making both sides of this conundrum equally true.

Raju Bharatan's opinion is that, whether consciously or not, a monopoly was created. Once that monopoly was in place, though, conscious decisions were made to keep the same people in positions of fame, power and wealth in the Indian film industry. Bharatan gives examples in support of his position; such as, a few composer duos were always assigned more sound studio time than other composers could get. The three duos of Shanker-Jaikishan, Kalyanji-Anandji and Laxmikant-Pyarelal therefore could make more music than other composers, so 'truly was music-making in our films organized fraud by 1970 itself' Bharatan charges (1995: 367).

As for playback singers, Bharatan knows that some of them, who he calls 'children of a lesser singing God' (ibid. 363), were paid significantly less to record songs 'on the express understanding that there was no guarantee the number would be retained in the film' and later Lata or her sister Asha would record the song at fifty

times the pay if it was a song they wished to sing, and the rendition of either of the Mangeshkars would be given preference over the recordings of the other singers (ibid: 366). Bharatan believes that what listeners were left with—what they came to be familiar with and expect—was a ‘monotony of monopoly’ (ibid. 357). This does not mean that Bharatan disrespects Lata’s film music contribution in any way; he admits she has made wonderful recordings. But he believes that in all fairness there should have been ‘more than just two voices’—the Mangeshkar voices of Lata and her sister Asha—shaping public taste in women’s film singing (ibid. 372).

Bharatan also relates an event at Shanmukhananda Hall (a large auditorium in Mumbai that is regarded as a “Temple of Music”) at which Gujarati composer Ajit Sheth was speaking about the monopoly of certain voices in India, calling attention to the ‘obstacle race that new voices’ were forced to run in order to work in the film industry. As he was speaking, Lata Mangeshkar entered the room, and suddenly the speech changed to ‘how every budding singer needed the melody queen’s blessing’ (Bharatan 1995: 260). Bharatan found it very interesting that Sheth somehow felt compelled to modify his comments in Lata’s presence, rather indicative of the scope of her influence in Bollywood and those who work there.

In an article in the 18 May 2001 issue of *The Hindu*, V. Gangadhar debates the monopoly question. Gangadhar has been working as a journalist in Mumbai for about forty years, so is in a good position to look at the alleged Mangeshkar monopoly from many angles. He notes the accusations that Lata or her sister Asha have ‘played havoc’ with the careers of other singers, or kept them from having opportunities. He also notes, as Bharatan did, that other people in the film industry besides Lata have had more than their share of opportunities—referring to the same composer duos mentioned earlier.

When Gangadhar asked a music director (who asked not be named) his opinion of a Lata Mangeshkar monopoly, he said, 'In every field the best are preferred. It was the same with Hindi film music.' The same argument, then, is inferred—if Lata and her sister were not the best, then they would not have been preferred. To quote Mr. Gangadhar, 'Monopoly, in the field of music, is a harsh term. It implies ruthlessness, putting down rivals in the field. While the media speculated on the issue, there had never been clear proof of Lata and later Asha, being guilty of doing this'.

Gangadhar then quotes another unnamed 'new wave' music director as saying, 'Even today, given the choice, we will run after Lata didi. Do you know that in the past, some of the music directors wanted Lataji to sing for them so much, they shelled out some extra cash from their own pockets, if the producer was not able to afford her rates?' This music director seems to be saying that, despite her age, Lata's voice would still be his preference. This is a very odd concept to me, but Gangadhar is willing to accept it, stating 'Let us admit it, Lata was incomparable. She was so much better than her rivals that she did not need a monopoly.' With Lata near retirement, monopoly is not mentioned any more, and 'any song can be sung by anyone' (2001).

Other possibilities exist as to why the monopoly seems to have ended, and isn't starting up again with other singers in Lata's place. Peter Manuel and Niljana Bhattacharjya both site the importance of the cassette tape in destroying various monopolies that existed in Bollywood film music. First of all, before cassette technology in the seventies, film music was responsible for 90 percent of music sales in India, which fell to only 40% once 'new patterns of ownership, control, access and production were in place' (Manuel 1993: 15). With less film music selling, fewer people were choosing to listen to Lata Mangeshkar. Secondly, the recording labels HMV and Polydor had been monopolizing the market in India; with the advent of cassettes, loopholes in the law

allowed others to compete, which also 'broke the stranglehold that a few singers such as Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle and Kishore Kumar had on the film music industry. New companies and singers entered the market, creating competition' (Bhattacharjya 2008: 110).

Savitha Gautam also brings up a possibility that new blood in Bollywood has contributed to the breakdown of the apparent Lata Mangeshkar monopoly. In an interview with playback singers Sujatha Mohan, who has been singing playback since 1975, and Unni Menon, whose career has been on track since 1981, Savitha was told that younger music directors such as A. R. Rahman have brought a fresh outlook to Bollywood songs. Unni said, 'Rahman believes a good singer must be given a chance. He has opened the door to many singers. In a way, he broke the monopoly that existed till then' (Gautam 2006). It appears that if there was a Lata Mangeshkar monopoly, it was broken by the advent of many new things to India: cassette technology, new companies, new singers, new music directors. India was ready for a change.

5.15 Conclusion

The fame that has been Lata Mangeshkar's throughout her long career is still somewhat incomprehensible to me, despite copious amounts of reading and great effort to understand how a diminutive woman with a thinly childlike voice managed to monopolize the film music of a highly populated nation. That she was talented I do not doubt; that she had, as composer R. D. Burman called it, a 'microphone friendly voice' (Bhimani 1995: 236) I can appreciate. But, by Western standards, there was no reason for her voice to have pre-empted so many other voices and become the standard against which all other female voices were compared. But Western standards are not appropriate to use to judge India; and there, where people live their lives by karma and the guidance of the stars, it happened that Lata came to be considered as almost a

singing goddess. She was, and still is, beloved and revered as a singer in her home country.

As Gadgil Gangadhar expressed it, ‘To me, and I believe, to every Indian, Lata Mangeshkar is not so much a person as a voice—a voice that soars high and casts a magic spell over the hearts of millions of Indians from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari’ (1967: 36). What is amazing is that her voice is still soaring more than forty years later.

I keep reading things about Lata that astound me. For example, at her 2009 awards ceremony for the Legion of Honor, Lata remarked, ‘I am still singing, and many of my records are out, as well. But I don't sing much in Bollywood films because there are mostly duets these days. Earlier, there used to be actress-centric films but now there are actor-centric films, so there are more male-centric songs. And now there are just one or two duets, so that's why I don't sing in films’ (India Travel Times 2009). This woman was 80 years old—yet feeling compelled to explain why she is not singing as much in Bollywood films as she used to sing. No amount of illusion in the world could really make a listener think that a beautiful young heroine seen on a movie screen would have the voice of an eighty year old woman—could it?

There are those, apparently, who think that Lata could and should keep singing forever, that her voice is unparalleled. Others, such as Ganesh Anantharaman, think that she should have retired years ago, ‘when her phenomenal talent was a live presence, not a distant memory. But Lata, like all superstars in all arenas in India, could not bring herself to quit in time’ (2008: 158).

Indian musicologist Ashok Ranade stated that ‘film is a vision but Indian cinema is a dream factory with songs as the brand product’ (2006: 17). In that dream factory, there was once a teenager named Lata who began to sing up a storm; a storm big enough to obliterate the sound of hundreds of other female voices; a storm big enough

to bring many in the film industry and many in the audience to her feet in adoration of the sounds that came from her lips. Though her voice was mediated through the allure of countless actresses, when that same Lata, though now old and heavy and devoid of physical beauty, stands on an empty stage in a plain white sari and looks down at the music stand as she sings, her fans do not care if the reality in front of them is quite different from the filmic illusions that have used her voice; they simply love her. Whether I can completely understand it or not, Lata Mangeshkar is their voice, their nightingale, their goddess of song.

Playback Icons: Marni Nixon

In Hollywood, where voice doubles are supposed to be completely unknown, there is no individual whose stature in the occupation could equal that of Bollywood's Lata Mangeshkar. However, at least one ghost singer has achieved a certain reputation: Marni Nixon, also known as 'the voice of Hollywood' (Sommer 2007). As *National Public Radio (NPR)* writer Jeff Lunden expressed it, 'You might not know Marni Nixon's name, or recognize her face. But it's very likely that you have heard her sing' (Lunden 2006).

William Braun asserts that 'it could be argued that more people have heard Marni Nixon's voice than that of any other soprano in history' (Braun 2004: 30). Mr. Braun needs to qualify that statement somewhat, since it is not quite true as written; obviously he, writing for *Opera News*, was thinking of only western audiences, since arguably Lata Mangeshkar's soprano voice has been heard by a significant number of people—millions of people in India and in the diaspora—and probably more than Marni Nixon's.

However, Nixon's work in the Hollywood dubbing industry over several decades put her voice within the hearing of huge audiences, since it included significant roles such as singing for the female leads in very successful film musicals such as *The King and I* (1956), *West Side Story* (1961) and *My Fair Lady* (1964). These musicals continue

to be studied (or experienced in the non-scholarly sense) by new generations of people, guaranteeing that Marni's voice will continue to be heard.

6.1 Early Life

Marni Nixon had not set her sights on becoming a ghost singer in Hollywood. She was born Margaret Nixon McEathron in Altadena, California on February 22, 1930, the third of four daughters in a musical family. Marni was given her mother's given name and her father's middle name, Margaret Nixon, as her first and middle names, but she was always known by the nickname Marni for several reasons: when they were very young, her sisters had trouble pronouncing her given name and also to differentiate her from her mother (Spiegel 2007).

The McEathron family valued musical performance so much that they even had a stage built in their living room so they could perform for any guests who might stop by. Their mother was very driven to be successful herself, and to see that her children made the most of their abilities. 'Those who are blessed with a talent have a responsibility that they must carry out to the world,' she would frequently remind her daughters (Nixon 2006: 36).

All four girls were given as many music lessons and performance opportunities as Mrs. McEathron could find and afford. Therefore, being on a stage and sharing her talents was as natural to Marni as breathing. 'I started as a violinist at the age of four,' she told an interviewer. 'By the time I was seven or eight, I had a singing act with my sisters and was doing concerts and bit parts in movies. Music was something our whole family did, so it was no big deal. Singing has always been fun for me' (Burns 1999).

Given the McEathron family's strong affinity for musical involvement, it is no surprise that their daughters began to play with the Peter Merenblum California Junior Symphony. This organization was begun in 1936 by Russian emigrant Merenblum,

whose goals were 'to make an opportunity for his own talented students to perform their concertos and other concert music with the accompaniment of a full symphony orchestra' and to give to the talented youth of his adopted country 'training in the traditions of the European and American Conservatories similar to which he had received in his native Russia' (Merenblum 2002).

Since the orchestra accepted any interested and talented child, it would have been considered an opportunity not to be missed by Mrs. McEathron, and Marni was only nine years old when she joined it in 1939 (Nixon 2006:25). Peter Merenblum considered himself not just a teacher, but a musical father to his student performers, and encouraged the development of all latent talent he found in his pupils. So a precocious student like Marni, who had a lovely singing voice as well as the ability to play the violin well, was sometimes given the opportunity to set down her violin and sing with the orchestra when a performance needed some vocal talent.

Marni also was fortunate in her family's friendship with another talented family, the Eugene and Sarah Page family. In 1941, the Pages wrote a musical called *Overture to Freedom* which was to play on Los Angeles stages. Knowing how Marni loved to sing they asked if she would sing for them and their production manager, Elliot Fischer.

Marni did not even realize that she was auditioning, but her singing impressed Fischer, who was 'astounded that an eleven-year-old child could possess a soprano voice capable of singing coloratura,' complete with elaborate trills and embellishments (ibid: 27) and he became Marni's first vocal teacher—after first casting her for the singing role in *Overture to Freedom*. For this, her first performance in a staged musical, the young Marni was written up in most of the city newspapers.

The *Los Angeles Daily News* noted that Marni Nixon 'has a natural comic ability, charm, a nice singing voice, and she's so easy in performance,' the *Los Angeles Examiner*

reported that Nixon “delivered intricate florid measure with accuracy and aplomb that were astonishing in a little girl,” and the *Los Angeles Evening Herald* stated that Nixon was ‘a truly amazing soprano’ (ibid: 30). Note that although Marni was still just a child, she was beginning to make a name for herself, and this involved dropping her difficult to pronounce surname (McEathron) in favour of using her middle name, Nixon, as a stage name, since it was much easier to say and remember (ibid: 28).

Marni was still playing the violin in the orchestra as well as singing, and thanks to connections available to her through the luminaries in the orchestra board of directors, Marni had the opportunity to continue her classical vocal training with Vera Schwarz of the Viennese State Opera (ibid: 32). This Croatian-born soprano spent ten years in the Los Angeles area teaching in a private studio before returning to Europe in 1948 to teach in Salzburg and Vienna (Steane 2010) and Nixon was fortunate to have parents who could afford this sort of top-notch operatic training for their daughter.

Under Schwarz’s tutelage, Nixon continued to win vocal competitions. One of these was The Los Angeles School District Singing Award, which Marni won in 1945. In a ripple effect, this award led to more opportunities to sing, and these performances eventually brought Marni to the attention of Roger Wagner, who was in the process of forming the Youth Chorus of the Los Angeles Bureau of Music. Marni was invited to join the group, and quickly became aware that she was one of Roger’s ‘special singers.’ Marni says, ‘He always hired me and gave me the most solos of anyone’ (Nixon 2006: 38). This chorus soon evolved into the *Roger Wagner Chorale*, a group renowned for its virtuosity and versatility in concert performance, specializing in early music and French repertory (Bernheimer 2010). The chorale became a professional company in 1947, and were the artists behind the ‘voices’ heard by Joan of Arc in the film of the same name, with Ingrid Bergman in the title role, and which was Marni Nixon’s first contract with

the Screen Actor's Guild as a part of the chorale (Nixon 2006: 40)—and really, her first Hollywood dubbing job.

6.2 The Secret Garden

Marni's first solo playback opportunity came that same year, 1947, when she was 17 years old. Because of her frequent soloing with the *Roger Wagner Chorale*, Marni was well-known in Hollywood circles as a true soprano with perfect pitch. An important person who was following Marni's musical development was Ida Koverman, Louis B. Mayer's assistant at MGM (Nixon 2006: 31).

Koverman had been aware of Marni for years, since she was one of the previously mentioned Hollywood luminaries who sat on the Peter Merenblum California Junior Symphony Board of Directors. Koverman, in a conversation with Marni's mother, discovered that singing lessons were becoming prohibitively expensive for the family. Koverman therefore offered Marni a job as a messenger girl at MGM, hoping both to enable Marni's continued musical education, and also hoping that having Marni around the studio might present an opportunity to slip her into an acting contract (Nixon 2006: 44).

Marni did not get a contract, but one day while she was delivering mail, a man approached her and said, 'Hey Nixon! You think you're so smart? Can you sing in Hindu? [sic]' (Nixon 2006: 47). This conversation led to an offer for Marni to sing as the voice double for a ten-year-old child, the character Mary Lennox in the MGM production of *The Secret Garden*.

This role had been assigned to Margaret O'Brien, a gifted child actress who was not a singer, though this may surprise people who have 'seen' young Margaret both 'singing' and dancing in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944). It is doubtful whether Margaret's ability to sing was ever considered; she became a movie star because she was extremely

good at rendering believable emotion, and was particularly gifted at shedding tears on demand. By 1949, as one of the highest paid actors in Hollywood, she was nearing the end of a seven-year contract with MGM. She was most likely cast for the part of Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden* because she was a star with strong box office appeal. Allan Ellenberger explains:

O'Brien was voted one of the Top Ten Box Office Stars two years in a row. The National Board of Review twice named her as Best Actress, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences bestowed upon her their Most Outstanding Child Actress Award. These honors and countless others were given to Margaret O'Brien—all before the age of ten (Ellenberger 2011).

Margaret's character in *The Secret Garden* was supposed to sing a lullaby to her doll in the Hindi language. When the opportunity to sing this segment was offered to Marni Nixon, though she did not know Hindi, she recognized an opportunity when she saw one, and was not afraid of the challenge. She accepted the role, was tutored in Hindi by a Swami, and recorded her first solo playback assignment singing a Hindi lullaby.

Margaret O'Brien then was required to lip-synch to the recording during filming. Just as in Bollywood, Hollywood was using similar playback technology to create the illusion that Mary Lennox, the character portrayed by O'Brien, was singing. How interesting that Marni Nixon's first dubbing (or playback) assignment should be in Hindi, the language of Bollywood! (Nixon 2006:48).

6.3 The King and I

Marni continued to work at MGM, and to take any singing opportunities that came her way. Equally at home singing musical theatre or opera repertoire, the young Marni Nixon was described by *Opera News* writer William Braun as 'this young pipsqueak who had perfect pitch and could sing anything, the high Fs would not quit, and Stravinsky's favorite singer' (Braun 2004: 32). Marni had not always known that Stravinsky considered her a favourite; she just knew that by the 1950s she was singing

for Stravinsky and his 'right-hand man', Robert Craft, regularly, and enjoying her friendship with these musical giants (Nixon 2006: 58).

Although a classically trained soprano, Marni's voice was equally welcome on stage or screen, and her services would be sought after for many roles. Conductor Zubin Mehta, who appreciated working with Nixon during his tenure as Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, a post he held from 1962-1978, speaks for many of his peers when he says 'one name stood out whenever singing in the movies or engaging a soprano of real professional caliber was concerned: Marni Nixon!' (Lotte Lehman Foundation 2006).

In 1955, Twentieth-Century Fox began production of the musical film *The King and I*. The idea had been that Gertrude Lawrence would act and sing the role of Anna Leonowens as she had done on Broadway, but cancer took her life before that could happen. At the request of Yul Brynner, who played the King of Siam, British actress Deborah Kerr, who had become quite popular and whose work Brynner had seen and liked, was signed to play Anna. Early studio announcements stated that 'Miss Kerr will sing her own numbers for the first time professionally' (Special 1955: 20).

However, that was not to be the reality. An untrained singer, Deborah worked with singing coach Rhea Shelters, but 'after hearing a test recording of her voice, Deborah admitted to the studio, "I'm sorry, I'm just not good enough!" It was not a total surprise since she was not a singer' (Capua 2010: 90). Kerr's biographer relates how a nationwide talent search ensued to find a dubbing artist for Deborah, and singer Jean Bradley was selected.

Unfortunately, this plan did not work out either, since Jean Bradley suddenly became ill and died while working on another project in Italy. This tragic occurrence abruptly put Twentieth-Century Fox in a bind; they needed a good singer for Deborah

Kerr's songs, and they needed one who could quickly get on board. Marni explained how she got involved when she spoke with *NPR's* Jeff Lunden:

Somebody actually died who had been hired to do her voice and they were suddenly stuck, and the musical director, Ken Darby, called me and said, I think you can do this. We're going to send you a recording on her voice. You assess it overnight, come in tomorrow and sing it for us, which I did. And then they sent that to Richard Rogers [sic] and he approved of it. And so then in about a week I was hired (Hansen 2006).

With little notice before recording would begin, Marni plunged in, listening to recordings of Deborah Kerr's speaking voice so that she could make her own voice match. And herein lies a big difference between the Bollywood playback singer and the Hollywood playback singer: in Bollywood, the playback singer just sings with his or her own voice, expressing the song as the music director wishes, while in Hollywood, matching the voice of the lip-synching actor is critical.

For the western audience, a difference in vocal timbre immediately alerts the audience that the film is an illusion, and all suspension of disbelief vanishes. In order to avoid such a situation, Deborah Kerr and Marni Nixon, worked together, volleying vocal lines between the two of them so that though both voices contributed to many of the songs, the listener cannot hear the difference. When they recorded the songs, the two women 'were led into two glass-enclosed recording booths surrounded by the magnificent Fox orchestra. Deborah would point to Nixon and she would sing. Then Nixon would point to her and she would ... talk sing. The result was fantastic' (Capua 2010: 91). Marni's favorite song that demonstrates this teamwork, 'Shall I tell you what I think of you,' was cut from the movie, but is preserved on the soundtrack.

Of Deborah's voice, Marni says 'the tone was breathy, straight and pure ... a sweet sound, without the experience to modulate it for the many expressive and emotional loud and soft passages the song required' (Nixon 2006: 88). The teamwork approach that Kerr and Nixon used produced a seamless finished product that sounded

like one voice. So much so, that Kerr once told an interviewer, ‘The dubbing was so perfect that I almost convinced myself that I sang all the numbers’ (Capua 2010: 91).

Just as Lata Mangeshkar was an anonymous vocal presence in the early days of her career, Marni was only to be a singing ghost in this film; there was to be no mention of her contributions in the film credits, and this was spelled out very specifically in her contract. Terms were ominously reinforced by a telephone call warning Marni that ‘if anyone ever found out that I dubbed Deborah Kerr’s voice, I would never work in Hollywood again’ (Nixon 2006: 96). It was Deborah Kerr, unaware of the vow of silence that Marni had been forced to make, who made the ghosting arrangement public.

The March 9, 1956 issue of the *Los Angeles Times* carried the news in an article titled ‘Deborah tells a secret.’ Deborah’s contract with the studio did not stipulate *her* silence about Marni Nixon’s role in the film, and she saw no reason to keep quiet about it. She later told Marni, ‘I just thought you were so talented I wanted to give you credit’ (Nixon 2006: 100). The revelation that Marni Nixon had sung for Deborah Kerr did not damage the reputation of *The King and I* nor of Miss Kerr, and does not appear to have generated negative press at the time.

For example, the *New York Times* film critic writes glowingly of Miss Kerr’s performance, stating that ‘the voice of Marni Nixon adds a thrilling lyricism to her songs’ (Crowther 1956: 15). The same frank acceptance and admiration is apparent in an article about the release of the soundtrack for *The King and I*, ‘one of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s most charming scores’ which, as the *New York Times* reported, features ‘Yul Brynner still singing his role as the King and Deborah Kerr as Anna. Miss Kerr’s songs are actually sung by Marni Nixon in a light, pleasant voice, and Mr. Brynner’s King is, as it was on Broadway, an excellently projected characterization’ (Wilson 1956: 97).

At the end of the year, in its 23 December 1955 issue, Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* named *The King and I* second on his list of the ten best films of the year. *The King and I* also did well at the Academy Awards, being nominated in nine categories and winning in five. History, too, has been kind about this dubbing episode. Peter Riddle leaves this comment in *The American Musical*: 'Although her (Deborah Kerr's) songs were dubbed by the accomplished mimic Marni Nixon, the timbre of their voices is well matched, and the synchronization is excellent' (Riddle 2003: 161), reinforcing what was said earlier about the importance to the western audience of making any use of dubbing completely invisible, so the audience will not notice that they have been deceived—and if they come to find out they have been, they do not mind.

6.4 Dubbing and More Dubbing

Deborah's announcement that Marni Nixon's voice was used instead of her own did not stop Marni from working in Hollywood again, as the language of her contract and the ominous phone call had threatened. She even dubbed for Deborah Kerr a few years later in *An Affair to Remember*. This film is not classed as a musical, although it contains four songs, all sung by Deborah Kerr's character, Terry, a nightclub singer. The songs were not recorded using the same method of co-operation that Kerr and Nixon had employed in *The King and I*. Instead, Kerr advised Nixon, 'You know me so well by now. Just sing the songs the way you think I would sing them and I'll just do them as you lay down the tracks!' (Nixon 2006: 97). Marni's work on this film was important because, though she was not credited on the film and received no royalties, she was credited on the back of the LP record cover, though listed only as "soprano soloist" in small print alongside the names of orchestra musicians (Nixon 2006:98). That is not much credit, and rather misleading, but certainly was better than no credit at all.

In an interview with Aryeh Oron, Marni Nixon recalled, 'I also dubbed Janet Leigh ... and Jeanne Crain in some of the smaller features. [Jeanne] had a regular person who dubbed for her in the bigger films' (2001). This is a very provocative statement, suggesting as it does that it was habitual practice in the Hollywood studio system to routinely employ singers to dub for specific actors and actresses.

In fact, we learn from Laura Wagner's research (1998) that singer Louanne Hogan was 'under contract to Fox as Jeanne Crain's voice double' throughout the decade of the forties, in such blockbuster films as *State Fair* (1945) and *Centennial Summer* (1946). As for Janet Leigh—it is surprising that she would need a singing double since vocal performance was what she studied in college; acting came later (Schallert 1947:C1), though it is her acting she is most remembered for. But the way the Hollywood film industry works is that the studio decides if a dubbing artist is needed, whether the star can sing or not.

A dubbing contract that Marni cites as among the most difficult for her was for television. This contract was likely to have been for the 1961 episode of *Route 66*⁶⁹ in which jazz and blues legend Ethel Waters portrayed a dying jazz singer. On the show, Ethel was supposed to sing an old song that she had first recorded in 1926, "I'm Coming, Virginia," but several decades had passed, and she could not sing it anymore, at least not the way she had sung it in her younger days.

Marni Nixon relates, 'She stood over me and told me what to do!' (Oron 2001). Waters knew what she wanted, and Marni's difficult task was to deliver. Another early dubbing contract that Nixon found memorable was her dubbing of one phrase in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953). In the song "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" when

⁶⁹ <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=watersethel>

Marilyn Monroe's character sings the line "These rocks do not lose their shape" the voice actually belongs to Marni Nixon. 'The studio wanted Marilyn's entire voice dubbed,' Nixon reported. 'They thought her voice was silly. I thought that was awful—her voice suited her persona so beautifully' (Oron 2001). Aryeh Oron describes Nixon's voice as 'chameleon-like' since she has the ability to replicate the timbre of another's voice to match so closely that her contribution would match the voice of another, whether it was Deborah Kerr or Marilyn Monroe or Ethel Waters.

6.5 West Side Story

It was in part Marni's talent to match her voice to the tonal quality of the actress that led to her selection as the playback singer for the role of Maria in *West Side Story*. According to Peter Riddle, 'Nixon dubbed Natalie Wood's songs in a near perfect imitation of that actress's vocal quality, and with a most convincing Hispanic accent' (Riddle 2003: 167). During preproduction for *West Side Story*, it was decided that since the solo music for the stage musical had been written for tenor and soprano, actors to be hired for the film would have voices to match those ranges.

A 1960 article in the *Los Angeles Times* describes how Natalie Wood got the 'plum role' of female lead, Maria, by beating out professional singers and dancers. She explained, 'I was told I had been in the running right from the start, but since I had neither sung nor danced in a picture several others were also considered. I also heard, though not officially, that the professional singers and dancers did not appear young enough for the role on film'. The article further states that initially, the producers had told Natalie Wood that her voice would not be used in the songs; that a professional singer would be hired. However, she says, 'I took some voice lessons, tapes were made, and the powers that be decided I could do my own singing' (Scott 1960: A5). Natalie, at 22, already had a string of television and box office successes under her belt, as well as

an Oscar nomination for *Rebel Without a Cause*. Robert Wise Productions knew that Natalie's box office appeal would help to sell their picture; allowing her to believe her voice would be used in the film was something within their power to do in order to keep the sometimes petulant actress happy.

Natalie Wood was feeling pretty powerful herself at the time of her *West Side Story* signing, describing herself as at a point in her career where 'she can select film assignments that appeal to her' (ibid: A5) and it is true that she was popular with the public, who adored her. This was not necessarily true of Hollywood insiders, who voted her the most uncooperative actress of 1961 (Stanwyck 1961: B2). Because the producers really wanted her cooperation as their star for *West Side Story*, they allowed Natalie to stipulate the right to prerecord all the songs in her contract; however, they reserved the right to decide whether her tracks would be used. Stephen Cole, Marni Nixon's biographer, explains:

She was lied to from day one, Natalie Wood. And in fact they did pre-recordings in the same studio with the same orchestra where Natalie would do a song and then Marni would do the same song. Marni thought it was barbaric because Natalie was not good, and everyone would tell her she was wonderful, she was fabulous, knowing that they would not be using her tracks (Hansen 2006).

Jackie Ward, another Hollywood dubbing artist who recorded for Natalie Wood on several occasions also recalled that Wood's singing voice was really not that good. She says, of her experience recording the songs for *Inside Daisy Clover*:

Natalie wanted to sing it herself and she tried to do it. Apparently, it was really bad. I had heard stories before I came in and auditioned, but who really knows what to believe? ... I went in and recorded live with the full orchestra. After I finished, they played it back and the orchestra was applauding me. I could not figure it out. Then André (Previn) told me that Natalie had evidently tried to sing it earlier. The orchestra was so thrilled that someone came in that could sing it that they applauded! (Awley 2000).

Though Marni was in the studio recording all the *West Side Story* songs, at first her voice was to be used to supplement Natalie's on the high notes—the studio's effort

to make Natalie happy. But then, ‘note by note’ (Thompson 2011: 34), line by line, they slowly used more and more of Marni’s voice and less and less of Natalie’s, until they finally decided to have Marni ‘dub Natalie’s singing voice totally’ (Nixon 2006: 135)—which was probably what the studio had intended all along, since, referring back to John Scott’s 1960 *Los Angeles Times* article, they had told Natalie in the beginning that they were going to hire professionals to sing for the film! Natalie Wood was unhappy about this—but probably should not have been surprised.

Looking (and listening) in retrospect, Seiler et al. noted in *USA Today* that though Wood’s singing might have been acceptable, ‘when you’re up against Marni’ (Seiler 2003: 7d) that is stiff competition indeed. The producers wanted more than acceptable, they wanted excellent; and they felt that they got that by pairing Natalie’s acting with Marni’s singing. People can decide for themselves, since the 2003 release of the *West Side Story* DVD includes a clip of Natalie’s take of “I feel pretty” which can be compared to the same take with Marni’s vocals. In my opinion, the latter is clearly superior; Natalie has a pretty voice, but with too much delicacy for the requirements of the big screen. And, as noted earlier, Marni’s talent for mimicry allowed for much more believable Puerto Rican accent *while singing* than Wood was able to manage. I believe the decision to use Marni’s singing voice throughout the film was a good one.

As an interesting side note, Marni’s voice was also used to sing a short duet with herself in *West Side Story*. Rita Moreno was playing Anita, sister to Natalie Wood’s character, Maria; a role for which Rita Moreno won the Oscar as Best Supporting Actress. Rita’s assigned dubbing artist for the role was Betty Wand, but, as Marni explained to Jeff Lunden on NPR, ‘they both had colds when we were recording the rumble. So Sal Chaplain [sic], who was the musical director, said, well, Marni can you do

Rita's voice? And so I said, sure. So I sort of colored my voice a little and so then I ended up doing a duet with myself—just a few measures there' (Hansen 2006).

By the time Marni Nixon signed the *West Side Story* playback contract, she had acquired much better negotiation skills. Just as in her earlier contracts, she was required to sign away the right to receive credit for her work and there were to be no royalty assignments for her, but Marni had matured enough to know that she was missing a lot of potential residual income. For example, the soundtrack album for *The King and I* became a top-selling Gold record, but Marni received only \$420.00 in total for her work with Deborah Kerr (Nixon 2006: 97).

Not wishing to repeat that mistake on *West Side Story*, which was projected to be very successful, Marni took the contract to a lawyer. Nixon explains that the lawyer 'noticed that though I'd signed to dub the songs, there was nothing about giving them permission to use them on film. So I could say, "You can't use them, or I'll sue"—unless you give me royalties' (Fowler 2008). With this understanding of the contract, Marni was able to direct her manager to insist on a royalty percentage. The problem was that all 100% had already been assigned; however, Leonard Bernstein graciously gave up one quarter of a percent so that Marni would have a royalty on LP records sold (Nixon 2006: 137). A vast improvement—though no one knew at the time that Marni was missing out on cassette and compact disc royalties—let alone the MP3 download market! After her *West Side Story* experience, Marni Nixon, like India's Lata Mangeshkar, began thinking about the need for recognition of dubbing artists as well as adequate pay and residuals. In an interview in 1960, she said, 'If the role is important, the ghost singer should get screen credit. Hairdressers get credit, so why not voices?' (Nixon 2006: 144).

6.6 My Fair Lady

Based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, the Lerner and Loewe musical *My Fair Lady* had been such a success on the stages of Broadway and London that when the film rights were sold in 1962, Warner Brothers paid the unprecedented sum of 5.5 million dollars for them. Jack Warner announced that he further expected to spend 12 million more on production costs, making it the most expensive film the company had ever made. (Actual costs were to reach 17 million dollars.)

As Mr. Warner announced this news at a press luncheon, Audrey Hepburn, who would play Eliza Doolittle, sat at his side (Schumach 1963: 34). The surprise to many people—both film professionals and the general public—was that Audrey Hepburn and not Julie Andrews was announced as Eliza, since Julie had played the challenging musical role to perfection on Broadway for two years and in London for another eighteen months. A *Time* magazine article from 1964 titled “The Once & Future Queen” illustrates why this would be so:

There are a good many people who have the distinct impression that Julie Andrews' real name is Eliza Doolittle ... So when she stopped in at her agent's office on a visit to Hollywood last year, the first thing she brought up was a reminder that among the various film offers that might come her way, *My Fair Lady* took absolute precedence in her mind. The room was crowded and all heads turned toward her. “Don't you know?” one of the MCA people said. “They announced this morning that Audrey Hepburn has the part.”

If Julie was surprised, many industry insiders were dumbfounded that Julie, known for her exquisite four-octave range, would be passed over for the lead in a musical. Audrey Hepburn was a brilliant actress, but could she sing? *Could she sing like Julie?* Julie had proven she could both sing and act, and her name really was comfortably linked to the role of Eliza Doolittle, as the *Time* article suggested. Julie told *Los Angeles Times* columnist Hedda Hopper:

I suppose I expected to be asked to play Eliza Doolittle. I gather I was considered for the film, but was not asked to do it. I thought I'd mind desperately, but apart from the first shock, I really don't mind too much. Perhaps I'd have felt it a little

more if I hadn't gotten this picture (*Mary Poppins*). It's nice to do something different; otherwise one might get the impression I could do just the one show (Hopper 1963: E3).

Julie was known in Hollywood for her always abounding cheerfulness and goodwill. Though she said she was not bothered by losing the role to Audrey, people may have thought that was her British "stiff upper lip" talking. The "Once & Future Queen" article in *Time* ratifies this, stating that 'Wherever Julie goes in Hollywood these days, the natives act embarrassed and fall all over themselves with a sense of shame for what Warner Bros did to her' in not offering her the role of Eliza.

As for Audrey, she had always admired the character of Eliza, with her charm and vulnerability coupled with inner strength. As early as 1956, it was reported that Audrey 'had a bee in her bonnet' about landing the role, especially since she had enjoyed working on the musical *Funny Face* with Fred Astaire, and hoped to be cast in another musical, most especially if it was *My Fair Lady* (Schallert 1956: 25). Naturally, then, Audrey was 'delighted to land the part of Eliza Doolittle', and threw herself into the part with abandon, and 'tried to make it me'. It couldn't have hurt that 'Jack L. Warner was so eager to get her that he readily agreed to her agent's \$1 million asking price' (Archer 1964: X9). Signing Audrey Hepburn was a coup for Warner Brothers because she was a top star, already an award-winning actress—including her 1953 Oscar for *Roman Holiday*. In contrast, though Julie Andrews was a known quantity on the stage, she was all but untested on the screen. Given the size of Warner's investment in the *My Fair Lady* project, they would need strong box office showings, and believed Audrey's participation would guarantee that.

Audrey had sung on screen before, though in much less vocally demanding roles. Audrey supposed that she would be doing the singing in *My Fair Lady*, and began vocal

training, spending hours with her coach, Sue Seaton. Despite her efforts, Warner Brothers scheduled an audition for voice doubles in June 1963.

Marni Nixon describes how each prospect was sent the music to learn, and how the singers were assigned a number so that their name and reputation would not influence judges. When it was time to sing, each competitor was sequestered in a dark sound booth so that they could neither see nor be seen by their adjudicators. Marni explains that André Previn, the musical director, 'knew that to really find a voice double, the only thing that the people making the decisions should be concentrating on was the voice. He didn't want anyone's eye to have any part in the casting process' (Nixon 2006: 146). Two singers were chosen from those who auditioned, with sound editor Rudy Fehr breaking the tie by casting his support for Marni Nixon to be Audrey Hepburn's voice double in *My Fair Lady*.

Marni describes her work on the project as difficult because 'Audrey seemed to have a lower, wider-shaped hard palette than mine, which was narrower and higher in shape. These anatomic differences can affect the high partials in the resonance and the overtones of the voice. Thus, the very fabric of our tones was naturally different' (Nixon 2006: 151). Audrey and Marni worked closely together so that Marni could learn to mimic Audrey's tones.

To assist Audrey in her preparations to record as much of her own songs as was possible, Marni would sing the songs, and Audrey would mimic her—so the mimicry went both ways. Marni had deep respect for Audrey and said their time together was delightful and 'proved fruitful in the end for the dubbing process. The more I know a person, the more chameleonlike I can be and the better I can serve the character being created' (ibid: 147). Audrey hoped that the soundtrack would end up as a blend of her voice with Marni's as Deborah Kerr had done in *The King and I*.

As it turned out, on some of the songs, Marni's tracks were used exclusively, while others used both voices. On "The Rain in Spain" Audrey's voice begins for the first few lines with Marni taking over, including the center speech that is sandwiched between singing sections. Audrey's voice can be heard in two sections of "Just You Wait" with Marni's voice used in the balance of the song. While Audrey recorded "Wouldn't it be Lovely" Marni ended up 'looping the whole track ... while watching and listening to (Audrey's) performance. Having been fortunate enough to watch her film the number, I attempted to put as much of Audrey's accent, personality, and acting choices into my vocal track' (ibid: 150). The track for "Show Me" was originally a blend of the two voices, but then the studio decided to go with Marni's voice alone.

According to Marni, 'Audrey kept begging to rerecord portions of it again. She felt that now that she heard how it should be done, she could actually do it' (ibid: 151). In the end, most of the singing for Eliza, about 90%, was in Marni's voice, instead of the equal blend for which Audrey had hoped. Marni Nixon believes the studio always intended replacing Audrey's voice and quotes sound editor Rudy Fehr as saying that 'they just let her record her tracks to placate her. They never had any serious intention of using her voice. Never' (ibid: 152).

For her performance, Marni was well paid for her work and received royalties on future sales of recordings of all type—an improvement over her *West Side Story* contract, which covered only LP recordings. She received no official recognition on the film credits, but it was common knowledge in Hollywood that Marni had ghosted for Audrey. Though her contract still forbade her discussing her work, somehow the leak in Hollywood, where cynics want to know the magic behind the illusion, resulted in Marni being interviewed about her dubbing by *Time* magazine. She told them that 'it gets harder and harder to adapt yourself to the person you're dubbing. Eventually you want

to play the character yourself;’ and the unnamed journalist bestowed on her the illustrious title of ‘ghostess with the mostest’ (*Instant Voice*, 1964).

So the *My Fair Lady* publicity was beneficial for Marni Nixon, bringing her name to the attention of the media as it did. Perhaps because of it, there was even hope among all the other dubbing artists in Hollywood that their profession might grow in stature because of Marni’s fame. But none of this meant more to Marni than a compliment that was given to her years later by Audrey Hepburn’s son, who told her, ‘My mother really admired you. She'd come home at night and say, “If only I could do it the way Marni does!” It's still one of my favorite compliments’ (Fowler 2008).

Unfortunately, publicity that worked favourably for Marni was not always good for Audrey Hepburn. From the beginning, even before filming on *My Fair Lady* commenced, she had not been able to escape comparison with Julie Andrews’ stage performance of Eliza. Since Julie was a superb singer, news that Audrey’s vocals were dubbed would reflect badly on her performance, at least in the opinions of some people. Film critic Philip Scheuer was an Audrey fan, and wrote frequently about *My Fair Lady*. When production had been underway for about seven weeks, he spoke with Audrey Hepburn after watching her mime to the playback for “Just You Wait” and reported ‘She is not, she admitted, a singer—“unfortunately. But I recorded everything and perhaps they’ll use some of it.” If not, the voice will be Marni Nixon’s’ (1963: B2). After the film was released, he described Audrey Hepburn’s performance as:

[A]s superb in her way as Julie Andrews was in hers, but more elfin and hence more pitiable. There may still be disappointment and resentment over producer Jack L. Warner’s final choice—but it’s made now. Also, of course, Miss Hepburn’s singing has been dubbed, mostly by Marni Nixon. The lip-matching is just about perfect (Scheuer 1964: C13)⁷⁰.

A few months later, Scheuer wrote abashedly that:

⁷⁰ This, thanks to Marni Nixon being allowed to redo looping until near perfection was reached.

Everyone thought it would be a race between the two Eliza Doolittles—right down to the opening of the envelope on Academy Award night ... But the experts were fooled. Miss Hepburn, in the parlance of the racetrack, was scratched The nominating members (this time the actors and actresses themselves) didn't even nominate Miss Hepburn for an Oscar (1965: 18A).

The Academy snub against Audrey was foreshadowed—but less cruelly—by the 1964 *Time* article “The Once & Future Queen” which stated, ‘My Fair Lady ... opens this month, and next winter Audrey Hepburn will almost certainly be a nominee for an Oscar’ (*Time*, Sept.18). The writer got that wrong, but this next part is correct, in which the article states, ‘But curiously enough, Audrey Hepburn might very well lose the Oscar to Julie Andrews. In Walt Disney’s *Mary Poppins*, Julie has just opened to flat-out raves in New York and Los Angeles playing P. L. Travers’ classic nanny with a sparkling sweetness ... also with an inner light that is original in itself’ (*Time*, Sept.18, 1964).

Critic Scheuer, Audrey’s champion, was incredulous that her work in *My Fair Lady*, the film that received the Best Picture award at the 37th Academy Awards, was ignored. He called it one of the ‘saddest acting omissions’ made by the Academy (1965: C9). From his earlier articles, it is clear that he knew about the dubbing, but he was not bothered by it. Nor did he see a relationship between Marni Nixon’s dubbing and the lack of an award nomination for Audrey Hepburn.

But other columnists saw things differently. For example, Hedda Hopper’s column gives a clear indication of the general opinion, going so far as to predict that Julie Andrews would win the Academy Award that year for *Mary Poppins*, explaining that ‘Audrey Hepburn was not nominated for the best actress award because she did not sing in *My Fair Lady*, a musical, and thus gave only half of a performance’ (Hopper 1965: C9). This was rather an undeserved and cutting blow, because Audrey’s acting was superb, and the dubbing decision was not hers. I think the problem was that Julie Andrews had become a media darling.

Forty-five years later, I do not think that anyone thinks badly of Audrey about the dubbing in *My Fair Lady* anymore. As one reviewer puts it, “The film was another triumph of the studio system, which, like the Pentagon, solves problems by throwing people and money at them. Hepburn was not a strong singer, which the studio knew going into the project. They simply hired Marni Nixon to replace her singing voice, and didn't tell Hepburn until later. Classy, no?” (Cox 2011). Through the lens of history, we see that both Audrey Hepburn and Marni Nixon were completely at the mercy of the studio decision-making process. They had no control over whose voice was used when, or what the balance of their sound would be. They both just did their best in their assignments to help create the beautiful illusion that the film was and is. But finally, in 1994, Miss Hepburn got:

[A] little justice as well. In the course of restoring *My Fair Lady*, two film conservators have discovered some of the vocal tracks she recorded in pre-production and, using a little sleight of hand, have rescued two of the recordings from oblivion, “Wouldn't It Be Lovely” and “Show Me.” And when the fully restored film is shown for the first time at a benefit at the Ziegfeld Theater ... the Hepburn version of “Wouldn't It Be Lovely” will play as the final credits roll (Grimes 1994:9).

What a shame that Audrey did not live to see that, she having passed away on 20 January 1993. She would have loved it.

6.7 The End of the Dubbing Era?

Less than a decade had passed since Deborah Kerr had publicly admitted that Marni Nixon had dubbed her singing in *The King and I*. When that occurred, Kerr's performance had not been attacked as being only “half a performance” and the revelation did not stop her from being nominated for an Academy Award. And while Natalie Wood had not been nominated for *West Side Story*, her co-star Rita Moreno had, as Best Supporting Actress—and won, though her songs were dubbed, too. But by 1965, antagonism against the use of dubbing artists seemed to be growing—it had become

politically incorrect. Perhaps this is part of the reason that, though Marni Nixon made efforts and voiced opinions in support of recognition for dubbing artists, little headway was made. There is still no academy award for dubbing akin to the Playback Singer awards given by Indian cinema.

The Oscar brouhaha over Audrey Hepburn's non-singing role in *My Fair Lady* did give Marni Nixon a few years of fame, and certainly opened windows of opportunity for her, but any recognition she got did not result in improved stature for other Hollywood dubbers. To this day, if dubbing artists are used, they are still mostly ghosts, who sing and then vanish. Marsha Siefert has explained that dubbing artists rarely become stars in their own right. In her opinion, this work became a 'double-edged sword' for Marni Nixon, both good and bad for her career. Her 'own really good work fades' and she is 'remembered only for her dubbing' (Siefert 1995: 57). And, in the case of *My Fair Lady*, it also sounded the death-knell on Marni's dubbing work, since that was the last big dubbing job that she was to be given.

6.8 The Sound of Music

Because of all the negative talk in the press about Audrey Hepburn not singing in *My Fair Lady*, using Marni Nixon's voice instead; and because of all the people who were irritated that the Eliza Doolittle role did not go to Julie Andrews, one had to wonder what would happen if Marni Nixon and Julie Andrews were thrown together. No one had long to wonder, for the two were to meet during the filming of *The Sound of Music*. This Rodgers and Hammerstein musical won five Academy Awards for the year 1965 and was the top-grossing movie on record (until *Star Wars* surpassed it in 1977.)

Julie, the darling of Hollywood, had shown with *Mary Poppins* that she was a veritable box office draw; she would star as Maria, and earn her second Academy Award nomination for best actress in a leading role, though she did not emerge as the winner.

Marni Nixon was also cast in the *Sound of Music*, but this time her role was in front of the camera, instead of ghosting in the sound studio. Marni played the role of one of the nuns, Sister Sophia. Marni was nervous about meeting Julie; she had heard that not getting the part of Eliza had been ‘one of the biggest disappointments of (Julie’s) life’ (Nixon 2006: 155). But when director Robert Wise introduce the two, Julie put Marni’s fears to rest, greeting her with ‘Marni! I’m such a fan of yours!’ (ibid. 156).

Before filming began, Marni did one piece of top-secret recording for *The Sound of Music*—Saul Chaplin asked her to record a demo of “I Have Confidence” since he had been working on some of the lyrics and he needed Richard Rodgers to hear the changes he had made and approve them (ibid. 157-158). Aside from that small pre-production assignment, Marni sang for nobody but herself, as Sister Sophia. Her musical moment onscreen was “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?” which she sang with five other singers who were cast as nuns. All of these women were cast because they had ‘been recommended by the music department at Fox’ (ibid. 158). Their voices needed no audition, though the studio was careful to make sure that their chosen nuns had the right look as a group.

As for the female lead singer for the film, of course there was no question that Julie Andrews would sing—her powerful voice needed no support or replacement, and was distinctive enough that audiences would recognize it from the soundtrack of *Mary Poppins*. After the release of the film, *Los Angeles Times* reporter Philip K. Scheuer announced:

Miss Andrews, naturally, does her own singing—and so does Marni Nixon as Sister Sophia. Otherwise it is anyone’s guess, since the picture follows the usual Hollywood convention of dubbing in all voices that may not measure up to the acting attributes. I don’t say this critically—particularly of a fairy tale that is striving for superhuman perfection—but rather in parenthetical admiration for the endless hours they must have put in, note by note and syllable by syllable, to sustain the matching and the illusion (1965: B4).

Other people in the press, such as Hedda Hopper, who had been unkind in her assessment of Audrey Hepburn the year before, did not even voice any concern about who was singing in *The Sound of Music*. After seeing the film, Hopper said, ‘the picture is superb—dramatically, musically, cinematically’ (1965: D8). She did not even express any doubts about the singing of Christopher Plummer, even though he had confided to her during filming in 1964, ‘But I’m a little nervous about singing.’ Hopper had suggested that he could sing-talk, as Rex Harrison had done in *My Fair Lady*, but Plummer had responded, ‘I feel that has been done and one should try to sing a little bit. I plan to keep up on my singing; it helps improve the speaking voice, too’ (Hopper 1964: Y7).

Despite his plan, Christopher Plummer was not able to sing in a manner acceptable to the producers. Sometime in post-production, the difficult matching that Philip Scheuer alluded to was used to create the illusion that Christopher Plummer was singing. It was frequent dubbing artist Bill Lee who was contracted to sing ‘when Plummer’s tracks were deemed unusable’ (Nixon 2006:159). Unfortunately, Plummer was not happy about the substitution. Charmian Carr, who portrayed Liesl, the eldest Trapp Family daughter, remembers the actor ‘resented that his singing was dubbed. Plummer has been known to sneer at the popularity of the film and its legion of fans’ (Lennon 2007: 43). He was fortunate that he was not publicly blasted for not singing as Audrey Hepburn had been; that would have made it even worse.

Christopher Plummer, however, was not the only actor in *The Sound of Music* whose singing was dubbed. Another dubbing job was done so smoothly that even reporter Scheuer, who was looking for the possibility, did not notice. He had been impressed with the way the film editors of *The Sound of Music* had segued so carefully between dialogue and singing, carefully treading ‘the delicate line between the likely

and the absurd, as when the Mother Abbess ... suddenly lifts her deep contralto voice in 'Climb Every Mountain' (Scheuer 1965: B4). That description sounds like Scheuer believed actress Peggy Wood, who played Mother Abbess, moved smoothly from speech to song; so the illusion was successful.

The reality was, however, that while Wood did the speaking, her singing was dubbed for this moving number. It wasn't that Peggy Wood was incapable of singing; as a former operetta star who had starred in heavily musical pieces such as Victor Herbert's *Naughty Marietta*, Wood could definitely sing. The problem was that Peggy did not wish to sing; at 72 years old, she did not think her voice was as good as it should be to do justice to the song. Therefore, New York City Opera's Margery MacKay, mezzo-soprano, was contracted to do the dubbing work for Miss Wood in this song.

For Margery, the assignment dubbing for Wood was unusual, because, as she explained, most 'actors aren't particularly happy about having their singing dubbed by voice ghosts, but Peggy Wood was the exception. Even though she had been a major star in operetta, she realized that her voice was no longer what it once had been, and told me she felt relieved when she found out she wouldn't have to do her own singing' (MacKay 1994: 21).

When Margery MacKay recorded "Climb Every Mountain" she did it as a fulsome aria, the way it would be done when performed onstage by an opera singer. But, according to Margery, 'Peggy didn't want to do it that way. She thought it should come naturally out of dialogue, retaining a conversational feeling—she was, after all, singing to Maria, not to the world—and only gradually reach its emotional climax. So, when they shot the scene, she acted it that way, often in profile, not full-face-to-camera. Later, I went back into the studio and recorded it, watching the film and watching what she did visually as closely as I could' (ibid: 22).

Just as Scheuer described it—note by note, syllable by syllable—Margery MacKay carefully matched her singing to Peggy Wood’s acting so that the illusion of Mother Superior singing rings true. Peggy couldn’t have been happier; Marni Nixon remembers that Peggy loved Margery’s voice, which ‘sounded exactly like she (Peggy) sounded like in her early days of singing’ (Nixon 2006: 160). It is interesting to note that Peggy Wood was nominated for an Academy Award as best supporting actress—without one biting comment from the press about her only giving half a performance because she did not sing.

It is likely that Christopher Plummer and Peggy Wood were the only two major cast members of *The Sound of Music* who were dubbed, one against his will, the other with her blessing. The voices of the seven children were their own, according to Charmian Carr and Angela Cartwright, who played Brigitta. Angela recalls that director Robert Wise wanted ‘a naturalness’ about the children’s performance, so he was not looking for a trained sound to the children’s voices.

However, ‘the cast learned the song and dance routines’ before traveling to the location shoot in Austria, so the children were well-prepared. Angela continues, ‘I think Rob Wise insisted on rehearsals so we knew each number like the back of our hand ... we knew the songs inside and out, so on set, when there was a problem, the kids weren’t the holdup’ (Lindell 2011). Only three of the nuns were scheduled to travel to the set in Austria—Peggy Lee, Anna Lee and Portia Nelson—so most of them, including Marni Nixon, missed out on that experience. However, before the cast took off, the nuns, backed by a large choir, recorded all their songs—“Preludium”, “Morning Hymn”, “Alleluia”; these tracks were played back in Salzburg as the crew ‘shot other “real” nuns in the abbey at their morning prayers’ (Nixon 2006: 163). So Marni Nixon and her colleagues ended up being playback singers in *The Sound of Music* after all!

6.9 Marni Nixon: Post-Hollywood

Marni Nixon had not set out to be a dubber or ghost singer, but that was the pathway that opened up for her, and because she was willing to follow that path, she was able to have ‘a remunerative second career in providing singing voices for many film actresses’ (MacKay 1994: 20) in addition to her work in opera. Later, she enjoyed a third career in children’s television programming, and a fourth as a Broadway actress and singer. ‘I thought of dubbing as being better than doing chorus jobs in jingles and commercials,’ Nixon explained, ‘Then suddenly I woke up and said, “Hey, I guess this is where I’m going, and maybe it’s as good or even better than where I thought I was headed” ’ (Burns 1999). Her dubbing experiences helped her to meet a lot of people who were helpful to her in her post-Hollywood career. For example, during the year of filming for *The Sound of Music*, Marni auditioned for the role of Eliza Doolittle on stage at City Center in New York—it was Peggy Wood who encouraged her to try, and Julie Andrews who coached her through the difficult ‘slipper scene’ (Nixon 2006: 162).

Though Marni Nixon retired her ghost, no longer furnishing singing voices for others in Hollywood films, she sings for herself on and off Broadway. In 2007, she toured with the North American company of Cameron Mackintosh’s staging of *My Fair Lady*, taking the role of Mrs. Higgins, a role suited to her age and experience (Gans 2007) but certainly an experience reminiscent of her Hollywood dubbing days. She actually asked for the part, since the producer initially approached her about playing the Higgins’ housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce, but Nixon said, ‘‘I’ve been connected with the show for so long, I’d rather do Mrs. Higgins’’ and a half hour later, the part was hers’ (Fowler 2008).

In 2001, she sang and acted the part of Heidi Schiller in the Broadway revival of Stephen Sondheim’s *Follies*. As she sang the lyrics to *One More Kiss* she realized that

what was important was not '... me imposing myself on the song, but the import of the song coming through me' (Nixon 2006: 282). It was this very ability to let the importance of film songs come through the medium of her voice that made Marni Nixon an excellent playback singer. This statement of Marni's could be applied to her present career of singing for herself, 'No matter how old I get, if there's a voice in my body, I will still be right for the part' (Nixon 2006: 284).

This is certainly true of her one-woman multimedia show "Marni Nixon: The Voice of Hollywood" which she has taken on a US national tour, and which is often offered in conjunction with masterclasses for young students of voice (Molnar 2009). In reviewing Miss Nixon's performance, Elyse Sommer reports, 'Now in her upper 70s, Nixon's speaking voice tends to get a bit tired but no matter. What she has to say is interesting and often funny. Best of all, her beautiful soprano which has also graced opera and concert stages is still rich and a joy to hear, and there's no lack of opportunity to appreciate it' (Sommer 2007).

Marni Nixon loaned her voice to some of the most well-known actresses to grace the silver screen just as the heyday of American musicals was drawing to a close. She was famous 'for being invisible' (Sommer 1999) and giving vocal beauty and authenticity to the illusions created by filmmakers who were trying to create an alternate reality for audiences. One wonders why they did not just cast Marni, who is also a gifted actress, in these roles, many of which she played on the stage at some point in her career. Elyse Sommer gives the answer: 'Hollywood during its movie musical heyday, as now, was always ruled by box office consideration. As people in the real estate business follow the mantra of location, location, location— so Hollywood's mantra is star power, star power, star power!' (Sommer 1999).

If the star who was chosen for the power to sell could not sing, would not sing, or possessed a voice whose quality was not quite right for the desired sound, Hollywood would need someone to dub for that star. This is not necessarily a bad thing; in the opinion of Marni Nixon, and I happen to agree, when a production studio shoots a musical film, it is their responsibility to present the product in 'the best possible light' (Nixon 2006: 138) and if that means dividing a role between two capable and talented people, what's wrong with that? The person who acts the role, who moves and dances and creates facial expressions and delivers lines of dialogue brings something vital to the character. If the actor's singing voice detracts from the portrayal of the character, or fails to show the character in its best light, then a person who can sing in the best possible way to bring the role to life is also essential.

6.10 Marni Nixon: 2010 Interview

This idea was clearly uppermost in Miss Nixon's mind on the occasion of a phone interview that I was privileged to conduct with her on the afternoon of March 5, 2010. I called her New York City apartment at 2:30 PM MST, 4:30 her time, when she would be back in her apartment after rehearsing for the better part of the afternoon. 'Wasn't it Shakespeare who said "The play's the thing?" I believe it was,' said Miss Nixon. This was to be the recurring theme during the hour of our conversation. Though I was sitting in my office in Utah and was not able to watch the animation in her face as she spoke given the miles that stretched between us, I could certainly hear animation and enthusiasm in her voice. At age eighty, Marni's voice was full of energy and vitality.

It was difficult to coordinate an interview time—not only were we working with the difference in time zones, but Marni Nixon has a busy schedule. While many women of Nixon's age are sitting in rocking chairs and knitting, Marni Nixon certainly is not doing that. In March of 2010, she was busy with her voice students, and scheduling

extra lessons for students who had auditions, and fitting in practices with the pianist for the benefit concert she would be participating in on April 8 in Palm Springs, California.

Though Marni has not done a full-length concert of her own for several years, she still stays busy singing, making guest appearances and making recordings as the opportunities come along. All that, coupled with the teaching. She does a lot of teaching. She is also thinking about a second book—the first one, *I Could Have Sung All Night*, was published in 2006—and the next book will probably be biographical as well, though Miss Nixon is undecided on the right angle; the ideas are still ‘whooshing around in the air,’ but one day they will start cementing and the writing process can begin.

Marni and I talked a bit about the dubbing work she did in the past. Her students today tend not to do the same type of dubbing work, though they may be involved in voiceovers for commercials. It seems to Miss Nixon like there is less dubbing work available today, perhaps because dubbing is such a ‘known technical thing’—audiences are less easy to fool. When casting is done, there is a tendency to cast a person who can really do it all. In the past, the popularity of the star was most important, and producers would use them even if they could not sing, whereas today they are trying to hire talent with the ability to sing, act and dance, if that is what the part calls for.

We talked about the use of off-stage singers on Broadway. Sometimes the parts are so athletic, that even though the actor has the ability to both dance and sing, doing both simultaneously leaves them breathless. So the producer will plan to have off-stage singers to take over when the athleticism makes singing impossible. Technicians are less likely to technically ‘tweak’ the sound of a Broadway play; it is just not practical. But of course, all kinds of tweaking of the sound are possible in the recording studio.

While I was mostly learning from Miss Nixon, I had the opportunity to tell her about something she knew little about—Bollywood, the cinema emanating from

Mumbai, India. I explained that in Bollywood, people like Marni Nixon aren't called dubbing artists or ghosts; they are called 'playback singers.' One of the most famous, Lata Mangeshkar, was a contemporary of Miss Nixon, and the two have a lot in common. They are just a few months apart in age: Lata was born in September 1929, and Marni in February 1930. They both sang in performance from a young age and had parents who encouraged the development of their talents. Both began singing for cinema stars in the forties. Both were ghosts—no mention of their work was made in the credits of the movies they sang in, nor were they paid royalties.

But then something happened that ended the parallels: in 1949, when Lata sang the song *Aayega Aanevala* for the film *Mahal*, the public did not believe that Madhubala, the star of the picture, was really singing the ghostly motif they loved, and clamoured for the singer's name to be announced on *All India Radio*. That was the beginning of the end of ghostly anonymity for playback singers in Bollywood.

Somehow, from that time on, Bollywood cinema moved from a secretive arrangement with ghost singers to celebrating the use of ghost singers, even creating awards for them—so in the same movie, an actress and a playback singer could possibly both receive a Filmfare Award for their contribution to the same role! As Miss Nixon said, upon hearing this, 'They make a virtue of it!' I asked what would it have been like for Miss Nixon if the same thing had happened in Hollywood? She said it was 'tough to imagine!' Would Hollywood and the American public ever be in a place to accept something like that? 'I am not sure the stars would go for it!' Marni laughed, 'If everyone was doing it—maybe then ...'

But everyone in Hollywood was doing the opposite. They were keeping the use of ghost dubbers a secret, mainly because they were worried about the box office. Would people come to a movie if they did not think the stars were actually, well, stars?

Whether singing or dancing, it was the same thing—the producers (and possibly the stars themselves) did not want anybody to know that the fancy steps they saw in the close-ups were done by a dancing double, and the star only danced in the long shots—same thing for singing. The producers wanted to keep all doubling a secret, or the audience might think the whole thing was a fake.

Film producers wanted films to be an illusion of being real. They did not want to call attention to the technical magic, or to call attention to the dubbers who worked so hard to make the aural illusions work. Yet all the technical workers are named in the credits of the film, the soundman, the microphone man ... but ‘who reads all those things?’ asks Marni. While she used to wonder why the singers did not get credited at the end of a film, now she thinks the level to which the credits go is a bit silly. Every little tiny job that contributes to a film is often listed in the credits now, but they are scrolled by so quickly and take so much time—what is the point of it? Miss Nixon thinks we need to come up with another plan; we do not need these endless lists of minor contributors.

When we watch a movie, Miss Nixon believes, we are there to see the show that is being presented. We do not want to be distracted from the show by the knowledge that an illusion is being created on the screen. We do not want to have to be aware of it; we do not want the producers to make a point of their illusion-making. While people who receive credit might like to see their names briefly flitting past on the big screen, it really is irrelevant to the finished product—‘the play’s the thing!’ Miss Nixon repeated.

Given that the Bollywood audience is *in* on the secret of the illusion-making in their cinema, Miss Nixon wondered aloud about how the audience could set that knowledge aside without it getting in the way of their enjoyment of the story being told. She thought that since the whole thing is accepted in their culture, and no one is

thinking about uncovering any secrets, they can probably just keep their eye on what they want to while watching a film. She thinks they each individually can 'put that information in a place that does not distract' them from the story being told in the film.

Just like in Bollywood, the song sequences in Hollywood movies are recorded using the same playback technology, wherein the songs are prerecorded and then played back on the set, and the players mime through their acting to match the prerecorded sounds. The film itself is actually silent, and the soundtrack is inserted. The two, put together, create the full story that will be presented to the audience.

While this is standard procedure, Miss Nixon recounted an experience where an actor would not cooperate with the protocol. 'In *My Fair Lady*,' she explains, 'Rex Harrison refused to mime to anything—he wanted to be recorded as he was doing it.' He had the star power to make demands and to be listened to. The technicians tried to explain that the microphones pick up everything. 'If he is walking upstairs, they will hear that as well as his singing. How does the microphone know what to pick up and what to leave off the track?' Despite these efforts, Mr. Harrison 'refused to listen to reason.'

What could the technicians do? They had to design a microphone that could be hidden in Mr. Harrison's clothing within range of his mouth so his singing could be picked up. Then they would have to isolate that sound on the track and rerecord it cleaned up without any clumping sounds onto a multitrack. A lot of effort—but it worked, and we, the public, are none the wiser.

With all this talk of successful pictures like *My Fair Lady*, I wondered aloud to Miss Nixon whether she had ever wished she really could just do the whole part, not the singing alone—after all, she has recreated most of her film singing roles on stage and done a fabulous job. She said 'Of course!' and then reminisced about a few of the roles.

‘For *The King and I*,’ she recalled, ‘I wasn’t a known quantity. They wanted to hire stars that had already been established to sell a picture.’ She talked about how the studios want to find a certain “look” or a certain “star quality” in a performer. ‘There were some things I probably could have done ...’ Marni said, then laughed, ‘Not Maria in *West Side Story*! I don’t look a bit Puerto Rican!—I probably could have done *My Fair Lady*.’

In *The Sound of Music*, in which Marni had the onscreen role of a nun, Sister Sophia, she was aware that not all the major players sang for their own roles. Both Christopher Plummer (Captain Von Trapp) and Peggy Wood (Mother Abbess) were dubbed. Marni explains that the producers ‘cast the whole person they want’ which encompasses looks, voice and star quality. All of these are considered in the audition process. However, a person’s voice is one thing in an audition room and can be quite another filtered through sound recording equipment. When they ‘get to the nitty-gritty, they may discover, this is not good enough’ and may tell the actor that they need to develop their voice (through singing lessons) or perhaps even dub their voice; whatever it takes to create the illusion they need. Usually the actor has already signed the contract and they are months into filming when the vocal problems arise, and they must cooperate with the producers so that there is a good finished product.

In *The Sound of Music*, Peggy Wood requested that her voice be dubbed because she did not like the sound of her own tracks—her voice had aged, and she wanted the sound to have a younger quality. This happened to many stars, though Miss Nixon mentioned that Mary Martin was one star who did not seem to age. She could play and sing younger roles and get away with it. Marni cautioned that this is much easier to do on stage, but with a camera you have close-ups, ‘the camera is in your face’. There is a way that the camera reacts to you—your singing, your character, your personality—that is very different and unlike the experience of stage acting. ‘The stage is more

forgiving' Marni explained, since the audience is further away and never sees the performer's face larger than life, as displayed on a movie screen.

Nowadays, if a big producer was interviewed, they might say they make casting and dubbing calls differently than they did in the past. Miss Nixon says they 'go by the lay of the land,' always with their finger on what is socially acceptable, thinking about how the outcome of decisions they make will impact the box office—sometimes they take a chance and do something differently, sometimes they play it safe. In the heyday of Hollywood musicals, part of what they did was look for dubbers, and there were people looking for that kind of work. They were jingle singers, commercial voice-over actors, off-camera singers—a whole profession of people ready to be heard but not seen. 'You did not have to worry about what you looked like,' says Miss Nixon, 'You just had to fulfill the oral issue.'

When she dubbed fifty years ago, Marni just had to worry about creating a beautiful sound. But what about today? What are the attitudes about her singing in today's world? Marni admits that sometimes she relies on her 'dubbing luminosity' to help market her music. When she is performing at a concert that offers lighter fare—not the opera repertoire that she also excels at—she will sing the songs that she has dubbed, and will have marketed the concert that way, because it helps to fill the seats. Marni sees a singer as someone who needs to have a certain amount of marketing expertise. 'You sell the songs, then they gradually learn your name,' she says. If you are singing a good program and have chosen good material that is right for your target audience, you can fill a concert hall. The same is true of albums; if you are recording, you need to know the audience and then market to that kind of audience. Once you are known, you can have a 'this is my concert' or 'this is my album' attitude, but not until you have figured out who you are singing to and what they are willing to pay to hear.

That is the concern of the musical director of a film—he or she has to be able to figure out what the audience for a particular film will accept in the music that supports the story. Music directors need to very objectively weigh what sounds the best against the abilities of the cast members who have already signed on for the film. Their objectivity is much better than that of the actors themselves, so they are more likely to notice when something is not working. They are also in a good position to match the timbre of an actor's voice with that of a dubbing artist so the finished product is seamless, not drawing attention away from the illusion the film seeks to produce.

In Deborah Kerr's case (*The King and I*), she realized that her voice was not good enough to carry the songs, and was happy to have help. She had no say in who was chosen to lend a vocal hand, but she was accepting of the dubbing Marni Nixon did. In *West Side Story*, Natalie Wood was allowed to think that her voice would be used in the film—the producers were afraid that she would walk; they did not want to excite her. So when Marni's dubbing was used entirely, Natalie 'felt badly toward her' which is perhaps understandable since she had been misled by the producers.

For *My Fair Lady*, Marni was brought in for the whole filming, and encouraged to get acquainted with Audrey Hepburn. They spent a great deal of time together, which gave Marni the opportunity to pick up the nuances of her voice. Audrey took voice lessons, and Marni went along to listen. Audrey would pick Marni up for the ride to the studio, and they would chat about the songs, the film, life, everything. Audrey tried to show Marni everything that she was so that this would come through in Marni's singing. But she did not expect that Marni's singing would completely replace her own; she thought it would supplement it.

Despite Audrey's considerable effort to record the songs well, the production staff decided that Marni's tracks would replace Audrey's totally. "They had the final

choice,' says Marni, 'once you signed a contract .' Audrey was thereafter civil, but guarded, and greatly disappointed. But, in the final outcome, the efforts of both Audrey and Marni helped *My Fair Lady* to be a great film.

Marni Nixon has great respect for all the stars for whom she was contracted to sing. 'They could all find songs and sing them,' Marni asserts. 'They could all sing, and could choose what they would choose to show off their voices.' Unfortunately, when you are singing a role, the songs are not your choice, and all songs just don't work for all singers. 'Shakespeare says the play's the thing,' says Marni, 'You don't want the quality of the voice to be distracting.' If the actor hired for the role can't sing a song adequately, their voice turns into a distraction and can destroy the carefully created illusion of the film. Marni's role as a dubbing artist was to stretch her voice to take on, or become, the quality of voice of the actor—make the song sound suitable for them, but also for the needs of the aural illusion of the film. She says she would listen to the stars, then take her voice and 'toss it through their acting intent' making it match the character, and most importantly, 'their interpretation of the character.'

Miss Nixon recently viewed the musical film *Nine*, based on the Broadway show with music by Maury Yeston. While she appreciated the film, she felt that it could have done with some dubbing artists. The show needs a certain kind of sound, 'the sound of when everybody's singing in a big show' on the stage; 'the songs were designed for that kind of energy.' But some cast member or members, kindly left unidentified by Miss Nixon, had 'a dinky voice with no core to the tone.'

Now, you can take microphones and increase the volume, and you might be able to tweak the tone to keep a voice on key, but, Miss Nixon submits, you cannot change the timbre of a person's voice, you cannot give it depth when it is too thin. So, instead, the skinny voice is amplified, and the audience hears it clearly, but it just 'is not right—it

disturbs the perception.’ So while it may truthfully be the actor’s voice, it makes the listener too aware of the voice, which takes them away from the illusion. It is reality, but it is the illusion created by the film that is supposed to have primacy, not an actor’s voice. ‘Dubbing would have given them a better finished product,’ Nixon believes. ‘As long as it does not call attention to itself, and lets the play be the thing, dubbing can be better for the film.’

6.11 Conclusion

Throughout film history, producers have believed exactly that, that dubbing can be better for the film. Because of that belief, singers have been able to earn a living by providing singing voices for motion pictures. Marni Nixon is only one of many to perform this work in the Hollywood film industry; some of the others—Louanne Hogan, Betty Wand, Jackie Ward—have been mentioned in this chapter. Others are discussed elsewhere in this study, notably in Chapter 4. Some of Hollywood’s ghost singers of the past are truly ghost-like, having died without their contributions to film being recognized and documented. Some are still working in the industry today.

According to Marni Nixon, there seems to be less of this type of work than there formerly was, but that is only logical given that fewer musicals are being made at present. But during the decades that she was doing this work, Marni sang for such high-profile, award-winning productions that her work became known in ways that other ghost singers could have never imagined. Because the public found out about Marni’s ghost singing, they are left with room to wonder who else was singing, and who else was *not* singing in the past; and who is and who is not really singing today.

That being said, it is not likely that studios in America ever plan to be completely open about the use of dubbing artists. Voice actor Don LaFontaine said, ‘Expect anonymity. Even though you’ve been heard by multitudes, you’re not being *seen*. There

is very little glory and public recognition in this business ... the greatest joy comes from simply doing good work.' (Baker 2005: 23). While it would be nice, for the truthfulness of the historic record, to have full disclosure on this subject, this has not been habitual in Hollywood, whereas secrecy is the order of the day. The film industry in the west has always been bent on creating illusions of both the visual and aural type that seem as realistic as possible, and in order to do that, have felt it necessary to keep the mechanics of how the illusions are created as hidden as possible. They haven't wanted to spoil the trick by explaining it. However, in today's world, it is difficult to keep anything hidden—our whole culture is based on openness and access to information. David Thompson discusses in *Film Comment* what he sees as a:

[R]ift between illusion and contrivance, and the dilemma it puts on the cinema now. We lived through a rich age of illusion when the belated addition of sound let us take pleasure in the dream that we were seeing the real and whole thing—life. That's how we fell in love with screen behavior and movie stars. Then we grew jaded. The illusion became a habit and a cliché and we started to find cracks in its glossy façade (2011:35).

When Marni Nixon's experiences as a dubbing artist began to be published, that was one crack in the façade. The question becomes what to do about this and other problems. Historically, the Western film industry's façade has been built on two ideas that are at odds with openness. One is the star system—maintaining the illusion that the stars are so much more than ordinary people because they can look and act and sing and dance perfectly. The other is the idea that the technology behind effects used must be kept secret, extending illusions beyond the boundaries of their masterpieces—the films themselves—which has worked to make their work seem magical. This system has left omissions in the credits, even when people like voice doubles have made fantastic and essential contributions to the finished product.

What if the Hollywood industry, like that of Bollywood, were to become a little more transparent? Would the realism—of who sings, whose hands are seen playing the

piano, who is really dancing—destroy the illusion on the screen? That is the dilemma that David Thompson identifies. My personal opinion is that what has worked in Bollywood could work in the West as well; I think that western audiences can take it that the illusion stops when the film credits roll. But so far, Hollywood has not wanted to let that happen—they want audiences to keep believing the dream even after the show has ended. If only all the Marni Nixons who are working in the industry could be as honest as she has been; if only their contracts would allow them to be, we could have more openness in the industry. If only there could be more stars like Deborah Kerr, who appreciate the talents of those who ghost for them, instead of being afraid of sharing their limelight. If only fans didn't mind admitting that stars are not perfect.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the first chapter, I referred to the statement in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, 'The play's the thing' from Act 2, Scene 2. I wanted to discover whether the story being told—'the thing'—is what matters most to film in which singers and film songs are used, and especially those in which the responsibility for singing and performing is divided up between two individuals. I wanted to understand how perception and reality affect the use of songs and singers in the cinema traditions of Bollywood, India's largest film industry, and the American film industry referred to as Hollywood, two of the top-producing cinema centres in the world. This interested me because it seemed that Bollywood was transparent in assigning credit to singers, while Hollywood was equally determined to keep silent about the use of ghost singers. It seemed to me that Bollywood used a lot of illusion, if not over-the-top fantasy, in the production of its film song sequences, yet was realistic in giving credit where it was due; and that, conversely, Hollywood would go to great lengths to make a film song sequence look as realistic as possible yet make absolutely no mention in the film credits that a ghost singer was being used.

7.1 Research Questions Addressed

In Chapter 1, I posed the following questions, which I hoped to be able to answer through my research: Were the contributions of voice doubles treated the same in both

industries? How did the singer doing the voice doubling in each culture feel about their work? How did the audiences react to the use of voice doubles in films? Did they even notice or care if doubles were used? What kind of interplay might take place between audience opinions and filmmaker decisions about the use of voice doubles?

7.2 Treatment of Voice Doubles

To answer the first question, ‘Were the contributions of voice doubles treated the same in both industries?’ I examined the experiences of Lata Mangeshkar and Marni Nixon in their respective film industries, Bollywood and Hollywood. While the actual work of these women was accomplished in a similar manner, using most often the prerecording of their voices in sound studios with the recording being played back on the set for other individuals—actresses—to lip-synch to as film song sequences were enacted, the similarity ended there.

From 1949 on, Lata Mangeshkar’s name became attached to her work, so that audiences were aware that the voice they were hearing was hers, though the faces seen were different and various. She, too, was accorded a deepening level of respect by Bollywood film producers and by music directors who had responsibility for film song sequences. According to Mangeshkar biographer Bhimani, this was because the people with the power in Bollywood understood the ‘importance of popularity—the place where art and commerce come together’ (1995:159); since Lata’s voice was popular with the public, Bollywood studio heads appreciated her ability to help generate ticket sales. Therefore, her opinion about songs became important to them, and they gave her if not power, then at least the ability to influence their decisions in ways that were also beneficial to her career. The granting of an award for playback singing by 1958, brought about mostly by Lata’s lobbying for it, served also to give legitimacy and honour to her profession.

Such was not the case for Marni Nixon in Hollywood, where her singing was still contractually a secret when she sang for *West Side Story* in 1960, and again when she sang for *My Fair Lady* in 1964. In Hollywood, the use of voice doubles was ‘insistently denied by the exhibition departments of the majors,’ while the practice was in fact ‘fully permissible in the production departments’ (Ďurovičová 2003:3). Marni Nixon’s vocal contributions to film song sequences were never intended to become known to the public. For her and other Hollywood voice doubles, ‘it was a challenging and extremely thankless job for many singers. They’ve made others sound good without ever taking credit, in acclaimed films’ (Wagner 1998). It was then, and remains to this day, a hidden profession in Hollywood, where ‘They [studio decision makers] felt that this [voice dubbing] was a trade secret and that the public had no right to know how the behind-the-scenes movie magic really worked’ (Nixon 2006:96).

Therefore, based on the experiences of Mangeshkar and Nixon, I would conclude that the experience of a playback singer in Bollywood would be very different from that of a voice double in Hollywood. The Bollywood singer could speak openly about work assignments—not to the point of giving away information that would spoil a film, but to the point of being able to say that they were recording playback. The Hollywood singer could not even say that much, being contractually obligated to secrecy. The Bollywood singer, acknowledged as such, could hear a film song played on the radio and receive praises for a song well sung. The Hollywood singer could only hear praises being offered to someone else—the person seen, but who was not the real voice of the song.

The Bollywood singer might be nominated for an award for playback work, and might even win the award. The Hollywood singer would have no such possibility, since no such award existed. For the Bollywood playback singer, favourable public reaction to her singing would be perceived as a good thing, generating publicity for both the singer

and the film. For a Hollywood voice double, any publicity that would mention her by name as the singer behind someone else's acting could generate negative publicity for the film, and could end that singer's career in doubling, since this work is 'the sort of thing producers like to keep hush-hush' (Newman 1992:13). Beyond the actual recording of song sequences, the experiences of the Bollywood and Hollywood voice doubles are quite different.

7.3 The Singer's Feelings about Doubling Work

My second question was: How did the singer doing the voice doubling in each culture feel about his or her work? Once again, I turned to the experiences of Lata Mangeshkar and Marni Nixon to answer this question. Neither of these women initially planned to be a playback singer or a voice double, but because they had good singing voices and connections to the film industries of their respective countries, they had the opportunity to do this kind of work. Both of them did well on their first occasion, and were seen as reliable and versatile as singers, so that the powers that be felt inclined to hire them for this kind of work.

For Marni Nixon, providing the singing voices for film actresses was a 'remunerative second career' (MacKay 1994:20) since she also sang for herself on the musical and operatic stage throughout a lengthy theatrical career, and also had a third career in children's television programming, both of which were unrelated to the work she did as a voice double for film. Nixon understood that when she sang for film, she was hired as a ghost: what was most important as she sang for another person was to match her tonal quality to the voice of the star and that person's interpretation of the character being portrayed⁷¹. Given that her work was always to be kept a secret, as a

⁷¹ See Chapter 6, p.246.

contractual obligation, Marni Nixon never wanted or expected to become famous for her voice doubling work. She understood that, in the cinema of Hollywood, her voice was 'copyrighted to the producer rather than a tool of trade belonging to the professional employee' (Ďurovičová 2003:4). Marni Nixon did not expect to make a complete career out of singing for film actresses; there simply was not enough work in Hollywood to make that a possibility.

For Lata Mangeshkar, singing playback became her major occupation, which both rewarded her financially and garnered for her a great deal of fame in her home country. Her voice became an important marketing tool for Bollywood films; she did not need to change how she sang to match characters being portrayed, since her voice, described as 'ageless, pure, vibrantly alive' (Majumder 2001:174), came to be sought after by producers and music directors because its use could help them to success at the box office. Mangeshkar's voice became so ubiquitous as to create a near monopoly. As Ranade expresses it, 'heroines have changed but their singing voice has remained the same—that of Lata!' (2006:407). Lata felt that her voice and the singing contracts that came to her were gifts of God, and that her pathway to greatness was marked for her by karma; she does not admit to any politicizing on her part. Gregory Booth sees it less simplistically, crediting Mangeshkar's voice, her political acumen, and her ability to take advantage of 'the industrial and cultural system in which she found herself' (2008:47) to leverage herself into monopolizing Bollywood singing contracts. Mangeshkar biographer Raja Bharatan explains that Lata and her sister Asha Bhosle were 'only doing what anyone else in their position would do—employing every stratagem possible to hold on to the perch they have won by years of meritorious service. Their job is to hold on, ours to question' (Bharatan 2006:349).

Though their experiences as unseen singers for musical film sequences were very different, I can conclude that both women felt gratified by their work. Lata Mangeshkar came to expect that fame would be hers, and that her work would be adored by her countrymen. This they did, even awarding her with the Bharat Ratna, the highest award that a civilian citizen of India can earn. In contrast, Marni Nixon did not expect honours such as those offered to Mangeshkar; Nixon only expected to be able to earn a living, and to receive some measure of respect for the work that she did. Both women did their best work over lengthy careers, and both appear satisfied with their voice doubling work for motion pictures.

7.4 The Bollywood and Hollywood Audiences

Two of the questions I posed were concerned with the audiences of Bollywood and Hollywood respectively: How did the audiences react to the use of voice doubles in films? Did they even notice or care if doubles were used? As discussed in Chapter 4, the two film industries, Bollywood and Hollywood, each took a different approach to dealing with the use of voice doubles. Both were initially concerned that audiences would react badly if they were to discover that the actors seen on screen did not also sing the songs of musical films.

To address this potential problem, the Bollywood decision was to acknowledge that such was the case. From there, the move was from acknowledgement to celebration of the singer. In fact, even the vocabulary used in Bollywood—the picturization of a song—indicates the importance of both singer and song, suggesting as it does that ‘a song is served by the image and not the other way around’ (Barnett 2003:94). Conversely, Hollywood’s method of dealing with the possible problem was to try to ensure that no knowledge of voice doubling would be leaked to the public. Full cooperation was expected of Marni Nixon and others who took on dubbing assignments

since they were 'asked to sign contracts agreeing not to reveal their part in the production of cinematic illusion' (Chisholm 2000:124).

The audience had no part in these decisions that were made by studio officials in both cases. No one asked them whether they preferred openness or secrecy, but once the decisions were made, they quickly became a part of film culture, with Bollywood opting for credited playback singers, and Hollywood opting for uncredited ghost singers. Ranade explains that

Playback singing means a temporary, purposeful and controlled dissociation of visual and auditory sensibilities otherwise combined in the art of cinema. The phenomenon allows separation of sources of visual and auditory stimuli creating an extremely artificial, ie. man-made situation. It must be admitted that almost from its introduction the playback phenomenon has taken a comprehensive hold over Indian cine-goers' receptivity and imagination. Frequently, it has also determined the course of composers' creativity. This leads to significant cultural consequences not methodically analysed so far (2006: 408).

We do not know how the cinema of Bollywood would have developed had things progressed differently. We only know that the audience accepted the division of voice with body, and came to expect it and to venerate the singers as well as the actors.

Hollywood cinema, on the other hand, set the audience up to believe that singing voices always match the actors seen on screen, and have done so since the 1930s⁷². Hollywood public relations staff have insisted upon the falsehood that no voice doubles are used, proclaiming that such deception is 'unacceptable to the American spectators' (Ďurovičová 2003:8). So, they have traded one deception for another. Film theorist Philip Rosen states the opinion that the lies propagated by Hollywood publicists operate to 'suppress the fact of film as the result of a technified administrative process' (Rosen 1980: 172). Because of the lack of honesty about the mediation of sound technology as applied to the musical film song sequence, when doubling has come to light, there has

⁷² See Chapter 4, p.119.

been audience backlash against it, as we have seen in the case of Marni Nixon's doubling for Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*⁷³.

In discussing the use of voice doubles in the rock concert context, David Handelman said that 'lip-sync [sic] intends not to deceive but to enhance' (1990:16), and this is also the intent of using this technology in film. However, the idea that voice doubling coupled with lip-synching is a form of deception is persistent in Hollywood film culture, and therefore the practice is not readily accepted. On the other hand, since the practice is openly used in Bollywood film culture, there is no deception. The short answer to the question of whether the audience notices or cares about voice doubling is that the Bollywood audience will notice the use of voice doubles, because that is what they expect, and they do not care; while the Hollywood audience will only care if they notice.

7.5 Audience Opinions and Filmmaker Decisions

The last of my research questions asked what kind of interplay might take place between audience opinions and filmmaker decisions about the use of voice doubles. The desire to deliver a film that tells a unified and believable story has driven film producers in both Bollywood and Hollywood, and has been their primary concern as they have made decisions about song sequences. Vocal substitution has been used extensively by both Bollywood and Hollywood in order to make storytelling work better. Sometimes the motivation behind it has been based on economics, sometimes on time constraints and talent availability, and sometimes on purely aesthetic grounds, but always when one voice has been replaced with another, the replacement has been made with an eye to telling the story the best way possible.

⁷³ See Chapter 6, p. 222-228.

Film producers of necessity work toward being financially successful—that is how they can afford to make more movies—and their financial success is contingent upon box office receipts, so ultimately they must be concerned with producing a commercially viable product that will resonate with audiences. They have therefore paid attention to how the spectator will receive film song sequences, considering the ability of the spectator to suspend disbelief long enough to accept the illusions implicit in both sound and vision as the song unfolds. Bollywood and Hollywood film song sequences must work within this paradigm, and not require from the viewer a perception that will interfere with the unfolding of the story. While film song sequences are part of a film's illusion, they also must be tied neatly enough to reality that the audience will accept them.

When I became aware of all the technological wizardry that was possible in the creation of film song sequences, I wondered how others felt about it. I found it especially interesting to talk to people—people who share a Hollywood film background with me—about their experiences with song in film, discussing their ideas about what makes a film a musical, how they process the sound of singing voices in their minds, and whether they notice or care about who sings the songs. I found it fascinating that the same people who could enjoy listening to playback singers in Bollywood films, and be accepting of the playback practice in that medium, could be so shocked and disappointed when made aware of the same practices when put to use in Hollywood film. Although there have been times when Hollywood use of voice doubles received attention in the media, most of the time this frequent practice carries on without drawing attention to itself, so that one may suppose that a typical American audience member happily continues to believe in the illusion that all actors in Hollywood musicals always sing.

Yet just as in Bollywood, vocal substitutions were made in Hollywood, using the same technology involving prerecorded soundtracks, playback and lip-synching. Over time, changes were made and refinements introduced into the process, as described in Chapter 4. As I came to understand the reasons behind vocal substitution, initially I felt that Bollywood had it right—that singers should be known, suitably credited and venerated with film awards.

However, I also came to see Lata Mangeshkar's stature as an artist in her country as inflated and almost unbelievable; though I have learned to understand her career over its lengthy span, and have grown to appreciate her as a singer and interpreter of emotion through music, the length of her professional life and her almost deified status in the country continues to astound me. Lata Mangeshkar is, in large part, responsible for the fact that the Bollywood film industry delivers realistic credits that are honest about who sings what songs, so that an accurate picture of contributors to film can be kept, but her phenomenal influence in the film music industry, in my opinion, also caused her voice to be used too much. I think that perhaps the dichotomy between an actor's speaking voice and singing voice became too vast under her influence, and threatened to break illusions that would have been better served by voices more carefully matched to the timbre of actors' voices. This made me start to change my mind about the need for voices to be credited to the point that they were in Bollywood—maybe, when the voice is too recognizable, the story being told begins to be sacrificed to the fame of the singer, which does a disservice to the artistry of the film.

Marni Nixon, though a frequent ghost singer for American film, could never reach the same heights as Lata Mangeshkar because the milieu of American society is so different from that of India. Marni is a gracious woman with a lovely sense of humour, and I was happy to have the opportunity to chat with her upon occasion, and to

understand her point of view that all players—whether they are acting or singing—are a part of telling the film’s story; they are all very much a part of the finished product. Satisfying participants’ egos or worrying too much about distributing credit for playing a part in something that is really larger than any individual contributor can get in the way of the telling of the film’s story. If a film is well done, it may live on in the culture, enjoying re-releases and remakes when the actors and singers who created the characters have faded into obscurity, and that is acceptable if your attitude is that ‘the play’s the thing.’

7.6 Recommendations for Further Study

There are many issues that would be interesting to address beyond what I have been able to consider in my study of this topic. Ashok Da Ranade suggests⁷⁴, and I agree, that the implications of voice doubling on the Bollywood audience has not been studied in great depth. Ranade sees the dissociation of voice and body in musical films as having a far-reaching effect on audience sensibilities and on the direction that film composition took in India. Also, since the older generation of playback singers in Bollywood have left the profession through death or retirement, the influence of the singer seems to have faded, so a comparative study of the experience of earlier playback singers and today’s playback singers would be an interesting topic of research.

Since Hollywood voice doubling has been more hidden than that of Bollywood, there is research that could be done to discover more of these singers, and correct the ontological and historical fallacies identified by Rick Altman⁷⁵. For example, very little is recorded about Bill Lee (21 August 1916 – 15 November 1980), though he sang

⁷⁴ See quotation on (p.254).

⁷⁵ See Chapter 3, p. 109.

extensively for Hollywood productions⁷⁶. Simon Gilbert, who did the singing for Peter O'Toole in *Man of La Mancha*, has had very little written about him. These are only two of possibly many such singers whose contributions to film could receive close attention.

Bill Lee's name also suggests that a study could be done of voice doubling in animated films, because that is work that he did. Bill Lee provided the singing voice for Shere Khan in the song "That's What Friends are For" in *The Jungle Book* (1967) because the singing actor George Sanders, who was contracted to play Shere Khan, was unavailable for the final recording of the song⁷⁷. In this instance, as in many others, the actor who delivers the character's lines and the actor who sings the character's songs are two different people. For another example, Marni Nixon sang for Grandma Fa in *The Legend of Mulan* (1998), while June Foray provided her speaking voice (Nixon 2006: 268-269). There are many others who could be identified, and their experiences recorded for the historical record.

Television singers could also be studied. During the early 1970s, there were many American television programs involving singers and musicians, such as *The Monkees* and *The Partridge Family*. It is likely that some voice doubling took place on such shows, but once again, little has been written about these background contributors to successful television programmes. What has been recorded on internet sites could be expanded upon, and checked against information that can be found in the popular press of the time, and addressed with more academic rigour.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 1, p.27 and Chapter 6, p.231

⁷⁷ Sherman, Richard. (2007). *The Jungle Book Audio Commentary*. The Jungle Book, Platinum Ed., Disc 1.

7.7 CONCLUSION

As I have studied film song in both the traditions of Bollywood and of Hollywood over the past five years, I have gained a new appreciation for talented people who are willing to use their voices to enliven and enrich cinematic stories. Whether they are listed in the credits and given adulation--as will happen for them in Bollywood—or are willing to stay quietly in the background, letting the story be the focus, in keeping with Hollywood norms, they are voices that films would be so much poorer without. I have particularly grown to understand the lives and work of Lata Mangeshkar and Marni Nixon, each working in a different culture and therefore having experiences that could only be had in Bollywood and Hollywood respectively.

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