

Choreography: “His Name Was Coalhouse Walker,” “Getting’ Ready Rag,” & “Henry Ford”

Example 1 – Youtube Title: [“Ragtime \(Coalhouse, Getting’ Ready Rag, Henry Ford, Nothing Like the City\)”](#) This production employs wonderful **lighting** as the number begins. I love the red-lit cyc as the silhouetted figures make entrances from the US platform as well as the main stage floor. I’d love to replicate this. As the tempo changes at :44, there is a wonderful transition in the stages and blocking. The warmth and tenderness of between the Harlem couples that is displayed as this phase unfolds is really nice. At 2:21, the energy rekindles as a prelude to “The Getting’ Ready Rag.” This number must *really* pump with energy and enthusiasm. This will probably be one of the greatest choreography challenges we’ll face. Everything we do much be cleanly executed, sharp, and vivid. It needs to breath with the sense of raw emotion, passion, and energy that the number demands. The general choreography for the number that begins at about 2:31 is really pretty nice and effective. I really like the split of the sexes at 2:46. I think that’s a nice touch. I don’t really like the women’s chorus line with Coalhouse at 3:06. It also echoes another HUGE caution for this number; you can hear how winded they’ve become. Movement is great, but we do need to be mindful of breath support for the vocals as well. The couples dancing at 3:23 is really a nice touch.

The choreography for “Henry Ford” in this production is not as well executed as it is two shows down in our list. The movement is pulled off pretty cleanly, but it is far too uniform in nature. It gives the sense that *everyone* is doing the exact same thing, which is NOT the look we’re going for. There are groups of people who have basically the same job, but we need to see a nice, wide separation of work that takes place on the line. I can’t lie, this number is REALLY important to me. It represents something positive. This song embodies the best of both worlds. The song is a celebration of the American system. It displays the creation of the middle class in our country.

Example 2 – Youtube Title: [“Ragtime on Broadway – ‘Getting’ Ready Rag”](#) Tons to appreciate in the choreography of the Broadway production. The quasi-piano keying hand movements at :31 by the chorus are nice, followed by the hands and arms thrusting in the air for the following “Whoow!” I think we do want to follow the common trait of moving the chorus during the music breaks, but holding them stationary (not walking) during the vocals. This will help the actors to sustain the vocals through the number. They make use of the chorus line as well. Maybe it isn’t a completely incorrect choice.

Example 3 – Youtube Title: [“Ragtime: Getting’ Ready Rag/Henry Ford \(Speed Up the Belt\)”](#) For this production, I’ll focus on their work during “Henry Ford” at 4:43. First off, I love the entrance of the chorus from behind the traveler. I don’t know if we can use this b/c I really want to use the cyc at the start of this entire sequence, as explained within the first clip. We’ll see. I think there’s a beautiful sense of increased complexity as the number progresses. The activity is very cleanly executed and simple at the beginning. The, the action starts to vary by line. I LOVE the arms raising up in 2-3 different collective groups that begin at about 4:46. This motion gives us a sense of the progression of the assembly line towards the right (SL). The final sequence of “Speed up the belt, Sam” that begins at 5:30 is really cool. I very much want to replicate this choreography. Honestly, I probably wouldn’t be entirely disappointed with a ton of this entire number being reproduced. Bottom line, it needs to show varied movement that is synchronized by various sets of rows.

It needs to show the flow of production in one direction. AND we need to work in the unveiling/entrance of the finished Model T by the end of the number. We'll have to discuss where the car will come from backstage.

Example 4 – Youtube Title: [“RAGTIME Henry Ford”](#) I don't think I like the direction taken in this number. It feels far too spread out. It feels far too “dancey” in nature. I lose the imagery of machinery, mechanical movements, industry at work. The movement is fluid and pretty, not sharp and exacting.

Example 5 – Youtube Title: [“Henry Ford – Ragtime”](#) Again, I'm not completely connected to the work that's done here. I would point out that the **workers' costumes** are effective. The simple touch of giving everyone an apron is a good thing.

Example 6 – Youtube Title: [“Ragtime Clips – 1”](#) This is pretty much the epitome of what we're looking for in “Henry Ford.” The number starts at 4:58. The choreography is fluid, clean, and dynamic. Taken from a PBS documentary about the Broadway run of the show, this is, obviously, the model we'd love to replicate. I LOVE the ending as well. I think we'll totally utilize this for our final pose. Nice finale to the number. The costumes are entirely appropriate. Something as simple as **bib overalls** for the workers are exactly right.

Main Points:

- Make the movement as complex as possible right up until but NOT past the point that it can be pulled off flawlessly by the entire group. One weak dancer will ruin the effect of this number
- The choreography and movements should be sharp and pronounced. There should be differing movement by row of workers.
- We should see and sense a progression of activity from one side of the stage to the other, preferably towards the direction from which our Model T will ultimately emerge. Stay on top of speaking to Verloove and me so that you are clear on where this will be *prior* to choreographing this number.

Notes:
