You Can Succeed, Too! Maybe...?
Effects of the Fantastic in Eizō Sugawa's You Can Succeed, Too! (1964)

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Abstract

Musicals have shaped audiences' understanding of film reality in that the extraordinary and fantastic are not only permitted but expected conventions, whereby characters break into spontaneous song and dance, teleport to staged sets, and perform for both diegetic and non-diegetic crowds. Dyer (2002) claims these genre films provide utopic solutions to contemporary struggles and injustices. Yet, the scope of these utopian sentiments is limited to the Hollywood context. This paper argues how the Japanese salaryman musical connects to its American prototype, with the latter's ideas flowing seamlessly into the former because of the potential of transnational cinema. *You Can Succeed, Too!* (1964) draws on conventions of the Hollywood musical to comment on how the genre has become synonymous with America. Using pastiche and parody throughout the film, the Japanese musical reflects upon Hollywood cinema and its global role through stylistic critique and creative reinvention of musical conventions. Yet the musical genre that encourages imaginative, free-spirited portrayals of inner thoughts and emotions still supports the status quo. This paper analyses how while Japanese musical utopic sentiments are conveyed differently than in Hollywood musicals, the resolution remains the same: to absorb the dreamer protagonist into the censorial narrative structures that surround them. By focusing on the number "A Dream Desert," it argues how hopes and aspirations are rendered attainable only through self-sacrifice and compromise with capitalistic ideals. Through its three renditions, it situates the main character as transforming from a wayward fantasist into a hegemonic conformist through his growing proximity with ruling hierarchies. As the world and its media become increasingly cosmopolitan and transnational, it is crucial to examine how the musical genre has impacted film conventions both within and beyond Hollywood, bridging continents and entrenching other national cinemas.

Keywords

Musical Films, Utopic Sentiments, Japanese Salaryman Musicals, Film Conventions, Transnational Cinema

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Musicals occupy a distinctive space in film history, one where the extraordinary and fantastic are not only permitted but expected. Musicals routinely invite audiences into diegetic worlds governed by heightened emotions, stylized movements and choreography, and, most notably, sudden ruptures of realism. Characters spontaneously break into song to express their thoughts and feelings that would otherwise remain unspoken. Crowds that moments earlier behaved with everyday restraint erupt into synchronized dance. Meticulously staged sets shift tone and mood with a swiftness that mirrors the story's emotional stakes. These conventions are not merely stylistic flourishes but fundamental components of the musical genre. They signal to audiences that these films operate according to their own logic, in which realistic and fantastic elements coexist seamlessly within the numbers and yet clash distinctively with one another through the plot.

This constant tension between realism and fantasy—reality and illusion, conformists and dreamers—emerges through the push-and-pull of the office romance in Eizō Sugawa's *You Can Succeed, Too!* (1964). Two salesmen, energetic and ambitious Yamakawa (Frankie Sakai) and lethargic and aimless Nakai (Tadao Takashima), end up entangled in a whirlwind of deception, romantic mix-ups, and desperate business ventures to get ahead at the Tokyo travel agency, Towa Tours. On the precipice of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the company president's daughter, Yōko Kataoka (Izumi Yukimura), takes charge of the travel department, instating a strict, efficient American corporate style to boost tourism. Thrown together in unconventional circumstances to secure lucrative contracts over their rivals, Nakai and Yōko put aside their differences and realize that they make a great team, both inside and outside of work. The courtship between salaryman Nakai and the company president's workaholic daughter, Yōko, may seem unrealistic on paper; he longs to escape the hustle-and-bustle of Tokyo salaryman life, while she strives to revolutionize the business to make it more American. Yet the film conveys that Nakai and Yōko are the perfect pair—opposites who attract, opposites made for each other—by giving Nakai a promotion, earned not just by his own merit but also through his relationship with the newly transformed, emotional Yōko.

Nevertheless, it is hinted through Nakai's number "A Dream Desert" that his fantasy becomes increasingly distant and unattainable because of the growing proximity he shares with Yōko. He performs this number three times in the film: once as a solo, once as a duet with Yōko, and lastly as a communal number with all the main characters. The function of his musical

number gradually shifts throughout the film, ultimately ending in absorption into the salaryman status quo.

Focusing on the musical number "A Dream Desert," this paper argues that Nakai's hope to travel to the utopic Taklamakan remains but a distant dream because of the fantastic spontaneity of song and dance, as well as the drastic change of Yōko's character, also implying that his relationship with Yōko is a fantasy. Yet, to bring this utopia of freedom and romance back to reality, the musical genre has the heterosexual couple uphold capitalistic ideals of love through an advantageous union.

TRADING TRAINS FOR DONKEYS

The first rendition of "A Dream Desert" is grounded in reality, conveying that Nakai's desire to escape the hustle-and-bustle life of a salaryman is an actual, tentative goal. Nina Penner (2017) uses realism and fantasy in the musical to discuss how grounded the numbers are through the genre's conventions. She states that realistic musical elements may be the staging of the numbers in real-world environments, with ordinary human movement by the performers and on-screen diegetic musical accompaniment, whereas the fantastical is marked by teleportations in time and space, elaborate dance choreography with almost superhuman agility and transformations of everyday objects into whimsical props, and mystic sources of background sound. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that she proposes realism and fantasy as a spectrum rather than a strict binary. Penner (2017) emphasizes that tracking where numbers fall on this spectrum is necessary to understand "the musical's tendency to represent an idealized or utopian vision of the world" (p. 13). Therefore, numbers in *You Can Succeed, Too!* shift between using realistic and fantastical elements to characterize the inner psychology of the characters and emphasize the legitimacy of their goals within realistic or unrealistic stagings.

Nakai, the only character on screen for the first performance of his number, behaves in an everyday manner, casually walking around the airport's outdoor viewing platform. He does not break out in an elaborate, choreographed dance routine, nor does he use props in revolutionary, imaginative ways. We see him leaning against the guardrail, gazing longingly at airplanes taking off on the runway. The setting is directly connected to the diegesis, with no fantastic teleportation through time and space to perform the number in a more stylized set. Nakai and his coworkers just saw off the company president for his flight. The environment in which "A Dream Desert" takes place makes sense within the film's plot. Therefore, the airport

and the symbolism of the airplanes, along with the lyrics, emphasize a desire to escape: to take off, leave what you know behind, and travel to a new place where you can rediscover yourself. For Nakai, this is Taklamakan, the utopic desert in China. He sings about how he hasn't seen the desert, but one day, he will be back. Although seemingly illogical, these lyrics convey Nakai's longing to return to a simpler world, where you ride donkeys rather than high-speed bullet trains, and where the horizon is visible from all sides rather than being obscured by skyscrapers and high-rises.

However, Nakai's number has a fantastic element: the musical accompaniment seems to appear out of thin air, with a melodic, slow tune playing alongside his singing. There are no visible instruments or musicians in the scene, yet the music doesn't seem completely unbelievable within the film when compared to the previous musical number. In the sequence just before "A Dream Desert," Nakai's coworker Yamakawa puts on a dramatic farewell performance for the company president. In the musical genre, when characters perform for an audience—usually within the diegesis for other characters' entertainment—the number is labelled as formal. Penner (2017) differentiates between performative formal numbers and emotional spontaneous numbers, the latter performed primarily to release an individual character's repressed longings and intense emotions. Like the spectrum of realism and fantasy, formal and spontaneous numbers may also fluctuate fluidly between these types of performances, including a middle ground known as the communal number, in which diegetic audience members gradually become performers throughout the number, playing new roles for on- and/or off-screen audiences. In utilizing the varied conventions of these numbers, musicals demonstrate the emotional state of the characters and the present circumstances surrounding them. In *You Can Succeed, Too!*, the president's farewell performance is a formal number that is entirely fantastic and unrealistic, with loud band-like music echoing in the background of an elaborate dance sequence. The office workers magically have the dance skills of seasoned stars as they perform synchronously with matching costumes and props. Their bodies face the camera directly, adding another break in the diegetic narrative as they perform for the film's audience. The performers' movements in this number are more chaotic, with random workers even joining in the song and somehow knowing the exact choreography. Even with the latecomers joining midway, the staging frames the number in a visually appealing, dynamic way, adding to the fantasy that a crew of ordinary salarymen could be excellent dancers and singers who have

seemingly rehearsed this routine to near perfection. This first formal communal number was staged in extreme fantasy to contrast Nakai's realistic, spontaneous number, in which he sings about his personal hopes and dreams. By simply strolling and singing to himself, Nakai makes it clear that he wants to be unshackled from capitalism and workplace power hierarchies and return to a free, peaceful world.

This dream of going to the faraway land of Taklamakan arose from the insufficiencies of the salaryman lifestyle in 1960s Japan. Corporate hardships and widespread feelings of powerlessness were central themes in the popular Japanese proprietary cycle of "salaryman comedies." Salaryman comedies offered "narratives of labour in a new, light urban modernism, often through music" (Gerow, 2012, p.161), in which films followed white-collar workers as they pursued advancement on the career ladder and brought prosperity to their companies. A particularly insightful development in the plot of *You Can Succeed, Too!* is its focus on praising the "average salaryman" by reflecting frustrations with corporate hierarchies and strict office politics, a subject these genre films rarely address. This lends itself to being easily understood within the dual-focus structure of the Hollywood musical that showcases the divisions of sociocultural structures and poses utopic solutions to these conflicting ideologies.

Richard Dyer (2002) explains that utopic sentiments are posed in the musical genre to solve struggles and injustices mirrored in the real world, not just in the diegetic world. The five utopic sentiments he proposes are energy, abundance, intensity, transparency, and community, which function "as 'escape' and as 'wish-fulfillment' [that offers] the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide" (Dyer, 2002, p. 20).

Yet it is worth noting that Dyer (2002) centers his argument in the Hollywood context, stating directly that a problem with his model is that it is "a continuation of the utopian tradition in western thought" (p. 25), and not in other foreign ideologies. Nevertheless, the Japanese musical still connects to the American musical prototype, and the latter's ideas flow seamlessly into the former because of the potential of transnational cinema. In the context of this paper, transnational cinema refers to Björn Norðfjörð's (2012) definition of the concept as national cinemas outside of Hollywood invoking the United States "in their treatment of the Hollywood musical within their own national parameters" (p. 242), insofar as they share certain aesthetic styles and conventions with the foundational American musical. *You Can Succeed, Too!* draws

on conventions of the Hollywood musical to comment on how the musical has become synonymous with America. Through its musical numbers, this Japanese salaryman comedy closely resembles "Hollywood's utopian, dual-focus narration, while also revealing anxieties about identity, modernization and the musical genre" (Gerow, 2012, p. 164). We can see this through the character of Yōko, who will later be introduced as the revolutionary new thinker at the company and Nakai's love interest. The Hollywood dual-focus narration is built around "parallel stars of opposite sex and radically divergent values" (Altman, 1987, p. 19), which encouraged audiences to be mindful of the simultaneity of diverging ideologies and comparisons between them. Where Nakai is a lowly white-collar worker, Yōko is a president in the making. Where Nakai is lethargic and aimless, Yōko is driven and headstrong. He is a man who wants to escape city life; she is a woman who thrives in the chaos. The two protagonists are emblematic of the binaries found in the Japanese salaryman lifestyle, thus starkly emphasizing how different they are from one another.

However, the film also interprets the American musical, and America itself, through a humorous lens, poking fun at the illogical conventions that make the genre so distinguishable. In *You Can Succeed, Too!*, the United States is consistently described in opposition to Japan, bordering on parody. In the musical, parody aims to ridicule past media by "imitating discernible voices and styles, thus having a critical function" (Norðfjörð, 2012, pp. 242-3) insofar as audiences recognize the conventions being parodied and note the satirical representation of the former. Thus, in a parodic America, what you give is what you get, with an over-characterization of their no-nonsense work ethic: "Work is work and play is play... yes is yes and no is no" (Sugawa, 1964, 37:47). The film seems to be delivering a parody of America for audiences to critique through the lens of the Japanese salaryman comedy. Therefore, the Japanese musical "is made to reflect upon American culture and its global role" (Norðfjörð, 2012, p. 253) through humorous critique and creative reinvention of musical conventions.

Thus, utopic sentiments in *You Can Succeed, Too!* transform a lack of money into an abundance of money, exhaustion at work into energy at work, and an absence of connection into open transparency between coworkers. However, at the beginning of the film, these insufficiencies have not yet been resolved. Instead, the current bleak reality of the salaryman is highlighted through Nakai's melancholic and realistic performance in the first rendition of "A Dream Desert."

SWEPT UP BY ROMANCE

Yet, by analyzing the second "A Dream Desert" number, in which Nakai and Yōko sing a duet mashup of Nakai's song and Yōko's "In America," it is clear that the film begins to position their relationship as a utopic solution to the insufficiencies in the salaryman lifestyle. However, the musical number's fantastic elements make the romance and Nakai's dream as fantastic as the solutions it offers. Dyer asserts that musicals amazingly deliver answers to problems in diegetic film worlds but do not extend those same resolutions to real life. The weakness of positioning utopic sentiments in musicals as a solution to real-world crises through entertainment "denies the legitimacy of other needs and inadequacies [especially] of class, patriarchal and sexual struggles" (Dyer, 2002, p. 27). Utopic sentiments do not actually *solve* problems. A salaryman's abundance of money in a Japanese musical does not resolve the unequal quality of life and poor working conditions real-life corporate workers experienced in 1960s Japan. Therefore, by pushing Nakai and Yōko together through this musical number, their relationship resolves social insufficiencies but only temporarily and superficially. The union between a lethargic salaryman and a company heiress does not reveal the root issues, such as workplace hierarchies, unequal wage systems, or the alienation workers experience in the office.

Nevertheless, the reprise of "A Dream Desert" sets up the beginning of this fanciful relationship between Nakai and Yōko, which is fully realized in the number's third and final rendition. Additionally, their bond offers a solution—while an unstable one—to the tension between realism and fantasy, demonstrating the couple's unification and "the bringing together of cultural oppositions" (Sutton, 1981, p. 195). Whether this collaboration succeeds in the long term is another complication that must be analyzed through the musical genre's utopia.

But first, we need to analyze the second number. Similar to the first rendition of "A Dream Desert," the duet between Nakai and Yōko is set in a realistic environment that makes sense within the diegesis. They are walking around a garden at night after a party. There is no fantastic teleportation through time or space; they simply walk out of the building to perform their heartfelt musical number in the secluded garden. However, as the pair continues to sing together, Yōko's performance, the lyrics, and musical accompaniment shift the number towards fantasy. By performing two opposing songs—one about longing to escape to a world free from work pressure and expectations, and the other about an efficient Americanized workforce and the mechanization of human labour—this duet showcases how different the two characters are.

Nakai and Yōko literally butt heads as they sing overlapping lyrics. This is why it is inconceivable, even within a genre built on audiences' expectation of make-believe, that the pair resolves all their conflict in one number.

First, Nakai remains deeply rooted in realism. He simply walks around the garden area; he is not dancing or using props. In fact, he begins by sitting on a bench while Yōko sings to him. Instead of performing for someone else, he reprises his number "A Dream Desert" as a lyrical embodiment of his inner desires and hopes to escape the stress of work life in busy Tokyo. He gets up and wanders to a torch lamp, gazing at it longingly, perhaps as a symbol of rural life untouched by the big city's modernization of electrical lighting.

While Yōko does not act beyond everyday behaviour, she performs an encore of 'In America' *for* Nakai. She uses this formal number to try to convince him to adapt to the evolving times and become more efficient and modernized in both his work and personal life. Yet, Yōko eventually adopts Nakai's ideology and joins in the spontaneous performance, shifting from putting on a show to singing about her inner feelings.

The musical accompaniment alongside the duet mashup of "A Dream Desert" and "In America" may seem more poignant and obvious than in the first solo number, but it is added in such a way that makes it clear when the number shifts between the two songs. A slow, melancholic melody plays in the background as Nakai sings about the desert of his dreams, and a more upbeat, lively tune jumps in when Yōko sings about America. Drawing on Hollywood musical conventions, Yōko's number uses pastiche to spark connections between the musical accompaniment of "In America" and Western instrumentals popular in American cinema. Pastiche, like parody, imitates preexisting voices and styles to critique them through transformation; yet there is no impulse to ridicule or poke fun at the conventions that are so foundational to the genre. Instead, pastiche tries to replicate the past and emphasize feelings of nostalgic longing (Norðfjörð, 2012). Thus, in using instrumentals like those in American musicals to accompany Yōko's number, *You Can Succeed, Too!* evokes the classical Hollywood musical to bring forth feelings of sentimentality and reminiscence, but also to bridge the gap between the quintessential American and transformative Japanese musical. Through pastiche, the strategic use of recognizable instrumentals from formative Hollywood musicals before the cycle of the salaryman comedy signals the intrusion of "In America" into "A Dream Desert." Because there are no visible changes in the setting or costume to mark the transition between songs, we

must rely on this difference in musical accompaniment and the lyrics to cue us. Therefore, the sudden resolution of the battle between the slow and fast melodies seems even more fantastic and unbelievable when Yōko joins Nakai to sing about Taklamakan. She slows down her tempo to match his, and her "In America" musical accompaniment drowns out completely.

The rapid shift in Yōko's character is especially fantastical because the lines she sings in "A Dream Desert" directly oppose the ideologies in "In America." She first sings adamantly about the separation of work-life and personal aspirations, but ends up singing that one day, both Nakai and she will return to Taklamakan "together under the starry sky [and] sing all night long, looking for signs of love" (Sugawa, 1964, 58:24). At the end of their duet, the pair even kiss, highlighting how the number pushes them together as a couple, quickly and magically resolving their opposing ideologies in just a few minutes (three minutes to be exact). Therefore, this number demonstrates how truly fantastic the sudden romance is by Yōko's dramatic change from a headstrong workaholic to a more emotional and romantic love interest. In having the characters break into a spontaneous duet with an extreme shift in Yōko's personality, both the dream of Taklamakan and of romance seem but a fantastical dream.

CUTTHROAT CAPITALISM ENDS ON HIGH NOTE

Finally, culminating in the third and last rendition of "A Dream Desert," Nakai and Yōko sing together about their desire to return to Taklamakan and, thus, escape the stresses of climbing the career ladder. However, this reprise is deeply ironic because we clearly understand that, through his relationship with Yōko, Nakai is further entrenched in the salaryman's race for success. He may now be a boss through his promotion, but through his continued union with the president's daughter, he could one day be president. This cyclical crisis is inescapable for Nakai, so he will never be able to embrace the freedom of Taklamakan (unless by going to the desert on a work trip).

This bleak conclusion to Nakai's lifelong desire shows how the fantastical elements of musical numbers reduce his dream to a dream, and the romance with the company president's daughter to something equally fantastic. By highlighting idealistic solutions to the dreary salaryman lifestyle—such as an abundance of money, high energy and productivity at work, and transparency between coworkers—the film provides "alternatives *to* capitalism which will be provided *by* capitalism" (Dyer, 2002, p. 27): a union between a lowly worker-promoted boss and a company heiress that only serves the work hierarchies already at play. Therefore, we

understand that the dream of Taklamakan and the romance between Nakai and Yōko remain just dreams since these goals can only be achieved through sacrifice and compromise.

This sombre truth is shown through the musical's unrealistic elements, with characters breaking into spontaneous song and dance and drastic personality changes in just one number, thus demonstrating how fantastical the musical genre is for characters to wholeheartedly attain their dreams. Foremost, this last "A Dream Desert" number is set in time and space outside of the story's diegesis. We begin at a construction site that Nakai is overseeing, but we suddenly shift to open expanses and set-like backdrops where city skylines are painted upon. The fantastic teleportations seemingly transport us from one environment to another just to stage the main characters as they perform their grand finale. This reprise features more elaborate, fantastic choreography with the four characters somehow knowing the same dance routine and performing it smoothly. Nakai and Yōko run towards each other and immediately begin twirling around, holding hands, as they sing about their true feelings for each other. They sing about going to Taklamakan, the desert of their dreams, on a business trip, and how they are not afraid to look into the future anymore. They are also more energetic, with the duo smiling widely and spinning in circles. The melody of the number even picks up its tempo, becoming more upbeat and lively, especially compared to the first and second renditions of Nakai's number, which were slow and melancholic. The musical accompaniment becomes its own entity, with parts of the number focusing just on the instrumentals, rather than the singing. We are supposed to understand that this number is the grand finale, with no expense spared on the setting, performance, and musical accompaniment. Time even ceases to flow realistically with Nakai, Yōko, Yamakawa, and Ryoko Mita (Mie Nakao) freezing midair at the end of the film.

This final number is additionally the most fantastic of the three "A Dream Desert" numbers because it directly addresses the audience. The characters look straight at the camera and even sing to the film spectators: "We've gained love! We've gained success! We've made it and so can you!" (Sugawa, 1964, 1:39:41). By playing on the self-reflexivity of *You Can Succeed, Too!* as a film—and as a transnational film that critiques the Hollywood model through parody—it breaks the narrative away from realism towards fantasy, further placing Nakai's dream just out of reach. Through parody, Norðfjörð (2012) frames national films as transnational in that they will inevitably return to American cinema by criticizing and transforming Hollywood conventions to mould them into different critical tools. This is significant because it

demonstrates America's global reach and influence on cinema; audiences around the world need to recognize the American musical to understand its foreign parodied forms. Thus, *You Can Succeed, Too!* is transnational "in being both American and something other, and the gap between the two manifests the tension in both form and content" (Norðfjörð, 2012, p. 253), with a push and pull between the desire to revolutionize corporate Japan with a Western efficiency and to escape to a distant oasis of freedom. Nevertheless, despite its parodic form, the Japanese musical is seemingly still obligated to revert to the Hollywood studio system of happy endings because of widespread institutions of conformity.

Nakai transforms from a wayward dreamer into a conformist to the salaryman system. Like the plot of Hollywood musical films, the narrative of this salaryman comedy, which urges the everyday office worker to climb the social ladder to further themselves in the hierarchy, "overtakes the numbers, and the protagonists achieve only an apparent victory" (Sutton, 1981, p. 195): getting their big break and getting with their love interest. Ignoring the fantasy possible through extraordinary musical numbers, the musical genre ultimately encourages conformity whereby the ending upholds societal norms and expectations so that the couple can have their "happy ending." Thus, at the end of *You Can Succeed, Too!*, Nakai finally gets into a relationship with Yōko and receives a promotion that anyone in his position would die for. Yet, through these achievements, he is absorbed into society and its norms, and his hopeful dream of escaping to Taklamakan is absorbed by capitalism. This battle with a constant tension between the realistic plot material of the musical genre—whereby it is conventional and predictable—and the imaginative song-and-dance numbers in Hollywood musicals, which almost always end "upon a note of harmony—concluding with an actual marriage or some celebratory function" (Sutton, 1981, p. 194), and yet this Japanese musical is no exception. It points to the way the world truly is—one where Nakai could only succeed by advancing in his corporate life, either by earning a promotion or marrying up out of his league—and how the world could be, in that Nakai escapes the hustle-and-bustle of the salaryman life to the utopic Taklamakan. The musical genre that encourages free-spirited portrayals of inner thoughts and emotions still supports the status quo. Try as it might to advertise itself otherwise, the musical film still absorbs both its protagonists and audience members into the hegemony of its national context whereby everyone has a part to play in its economic and sociocultural structures. In corporate Japan, it is the responsibility of its workers to rapidly grow the national economy, show unwavering loyalty to their companies, and

foster strong business alliances and workplace bonds, extending work commitments beyond the office into the home (Gerow, 2012).

In the Japanese musical *You Can Succeed, Too!*, utopic sentiments may be conveyed differently from those in Hollywood musicals; nevertheless, the resolution remains the same: to absorb the dreamer protagonist into the censorial narrative structures that surround them. Musicals convey that "dreams can be realized, but only within the framework of accepted values" (Sutton, 1981, p. 196). Therefore, by transforming Nakai's "A Dream Desert" into a fantastic rendition at the end of the film—from the melancholic, realistic solo at the beginning—the number pulls his dream to escape to Taklamakan further and further out of his grasp the more he is absorbed into the workforce and the closer he becomes to Yōko. Ultimately, his fantasy becomes but a distant memory.

By illustrating that Nakai's desire to travel to Taklamakan, the desert of his dreams, is but a hopeful dream, this paper conveys how the musical employs fantastic conventions and dramatic arcs to resolve the tension between reality and fantasy by absorbing dreamers into conformists. Dreams become distant longings that must be sacrificed to succeed in the real world; escaping to Taklamakan is possible only through full participation in the capitalist order and the competitive salaryman lifestyle. Even Nakai and Yōko's union reinforces normative ideals of love, framing their relationship as an advantageous pairing through which the once-lowly office worker ascends the corporate hierarchy, becoming a boss and eventually the president. Across the three renditions of Nakai's number "A Dream Desert," his fantasy grows increasingly unattainable the closer he becomes to Yōko, both physically and emotionally. His first solo expresses an inner desire to escape his demanding work life, a dream portrayed as attainable through the realistic musical conventions. Yet the second duet with Yōko already transforms that desire into a fantastic representation of impossible hopes. By the final communal number, the utopia of Taklamakan has become a mirage, a false oasis conjured but never realized. Nakai, once a lethargic salaryman, can never truly escape the oppressive social order he is forced into through his union with Yōko. Ultimately, *You Can Succeed, Too!* reveals how the musical, despite its global influence and spectacular allure, imposes limiting ideals even as it celebrates fantasy and wonder, suggesting that true utopia may exist only in the fleeting spontaneity of song and dance.

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