Kelly, Gene (1912-1996) Encyclopedia Article

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Kelly, Gene (1912-1996)

A dancer and choreographer of enormous grace and indefatigable vitality, Gene Kelly created a new synthesis of music and dance in American movies. In 1942 he made his first film with Judy Garland. In the next decade he made an unprecedented series of lively movie musicals, including *On the Town* (1949), *Summer Stock* (1950), and *An American in Paris* (1951), culminating with *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) which Kelly starred in, choreographed, and co-directed with Stanley Donen. Kelly's unique achievement was to expand the range of dancing in the movies. For Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing took place in a refined social world; for Kelly dancing was part of everyday life and the real world. In place of the ballrooms of Astaire and Rogers, Kelly danced on car roofs, tables, and sofas, in streets deluged with rain, thus extending dance to a mundane world that would seem to ordinarily exclude it.

Gene Kelly in a scene from the film *Singin' in the Rain.*

Further Reading:

Morley, Sheridan, and Ruth Leon, *Gene Kelly: A Celebration.* London, Pavilion, 1996.

Singin' in the Rain, (film), directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen. 1952.