

SONG & DANCE MEN OF THE SILVER SCREEN SYLLABUS

Bonnie Weiss, Instructor

Class 1: Jan. 23 FRED ASTAIRE

You'll learn all about Fred's personal and professional life and a surprising talent he had in addition to his remarkable dance skills.

You'll find out why great songwriters like Irving Berlin, George Gershwin and Cole Porter loved to have Fred sing their songs.

And you'll be viewing wonderful musical moments from such great Fred and Ginger flicks as "Flying Down to Rio", "The Gay Divorcee", "Top Hat", "Swing Time" and "The Barkleys of Broadway". You'll also see him dancing with other partners, including Eleanor Powell, Rita Hayworth and Cyd Charisse. You'll even learn who his very favorite dancing partner was. (Hint: It wasn't Ginger!)

Fred was also a remarkable solo dancer. You'll see some of his most celebrated solo routines, co-choreographed by Fred, Hermes Pan, Robert Alton and other choreographers. And we'll end with your instructor's favorite Astaire solo, a wildly inventive piece that he created without the customary help of a co-choreographer.

Class 2: Jan 31: HAL LE ROY, BILL "BOJANGLES" ROBINSON, AND THE NICHOLAS BROTHERS

Hal Le Roy was a teen-aged rubber-legged comic tap dance sensation in the 1930's. His gangly "eccentric dancing" paved the way for other comic dancers. You'll see LeRoy in some delightful "art deco" dance numbers in films with such legends as Betty Hutton and Ann Miller

Bill Robinson is best known as the dance partner of adorable child star Shirley Temple in such films as "The Little Colonel", "The Littlest Rebel" and "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm". But even before he became a movie star he was a legend in vaudeville. You'll see a rare clip of his exuberant vaudeville act, learn how he got the name "Bojangles", and see him perform with his famous 6-year old co-star.

Fayard and Harold Nicholas are among the most celebrated and honored dance teams in the history of show business. Both Astaire and Kelly deemed them "the greatest dancers to perform on screen." They played vaudeville and the Cotton Club as children and performed in 30 films in the 1930's and 40's . They choreographed dance routines that were a stunning mix of tap, jazz and acrobatics. Some of their steps were so difficult they astonished audiences and even professional dancers. You'll see them performing some of these dazzling routines and singing some of the hit songs from the 40's that they introduced in several films from that era.

Class 3 : Feb. 7: COMIC DANCERS: BUDDY EBSEN and RAY BOLGER

Buddy Ebsen was a tall, lanky comic dancer who in his later years gained fame as a TV star on such shows as The Beverly Hillbillies and Barnaby Jones. But in his 20's and 30's he danced in film with such greats as Shirley Temple, Judy Garland and Eleanor Powell. You'll see rare clips of Buddy dancing with his sister and vaudeville partner, Velma as well as a routine with a 15-year old Judy Garland

Ray Bolger has been dubbed the greatest comic dancer to light up the silver screen. He had a successful career in the Ziegfeld Follies and in Broadway musicals before becoming a film star as the scarecrow in "The Wizard of Oz". . You'll see a rare performance of his vaudeville act, as well as a great dance routine cut from "The Wizard of Oz.", terrific routines from his other films, including his most famous number, "Once in Love with Amy" from the hit musical "Where's Charley"

Class 4: Feb 14 GENE KELLY

Gene Kelly took dance out of the ballrooms and into the streets. He traded the top hat and tails of Fred Astaire for his own signature white socks and loafers. But Gene was more than a dancer. He also made his mark as a film innovator, choreographer and, later, as a director

In this presentation you'll learn all about Gene's childhood, his role as a young dance teacher and how he was discovered for stage and screen. You'll see some of his innovations as a choreographer and director and watch him performing celebrated song and dance numbers from such hit films as "On the Town", "An American in Paris" and the iconic "Singin' in the Rain". You'll also see highly innovative performances from films that are not as well known, but that deserve greater recognition.

And you'll hear both surprising and moving stories about Gene's personal life, which your instructor learned about when she had the opportunity to interview his widow, Patricia Ward.

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Class 5 Feb. 21: **DONALD O'CONNOR**

Donald O'Connor is best known for his brilliant comic tour de force performance of "Make 'Em Laugh" in Singin' in the Rain. But he also had the finest singing voice of any of the song and dance men of the silver screen. From a family of circus acrobats, he started appearing in films in his early teens.

Clips include 13-year old Donald duetting with his first co-star, Bing Crosby, performances in some of the most colorful movie musicals including "Call Me Madam" and "There's No Business Like Show Business" and his two big dancing duets with Gene Kelly in "Singin' in the Rain". Plus we have an extremely rare clip of a 22-year-old Donald doing a routine that is the precursor to the iconic "Make 'Em Laugh" number. And you'll find out about a hobby of Donald's that may surprise you – and help you to realize what a versatile man he truly was.

Class 6: Feb. 28 **A FLOCK OF FABULOUS MALE DANCERS**

Here you'll enjoy engaging routines by Gower Champion (with his dance partner and spouse, Marge), Sammy Davis Jr., Tommy Tune, Bobby Van, brilliant dancer/choreographer Bob Fosse, Tommy Rall (the favorite dancer of other dancers), a surprise character actor who also dances, and more.

We'll end with outstanding scenes of male ensemble dancing from two celebrated Hollywood films.