

Gene Kelly 1912-1996

Early Life

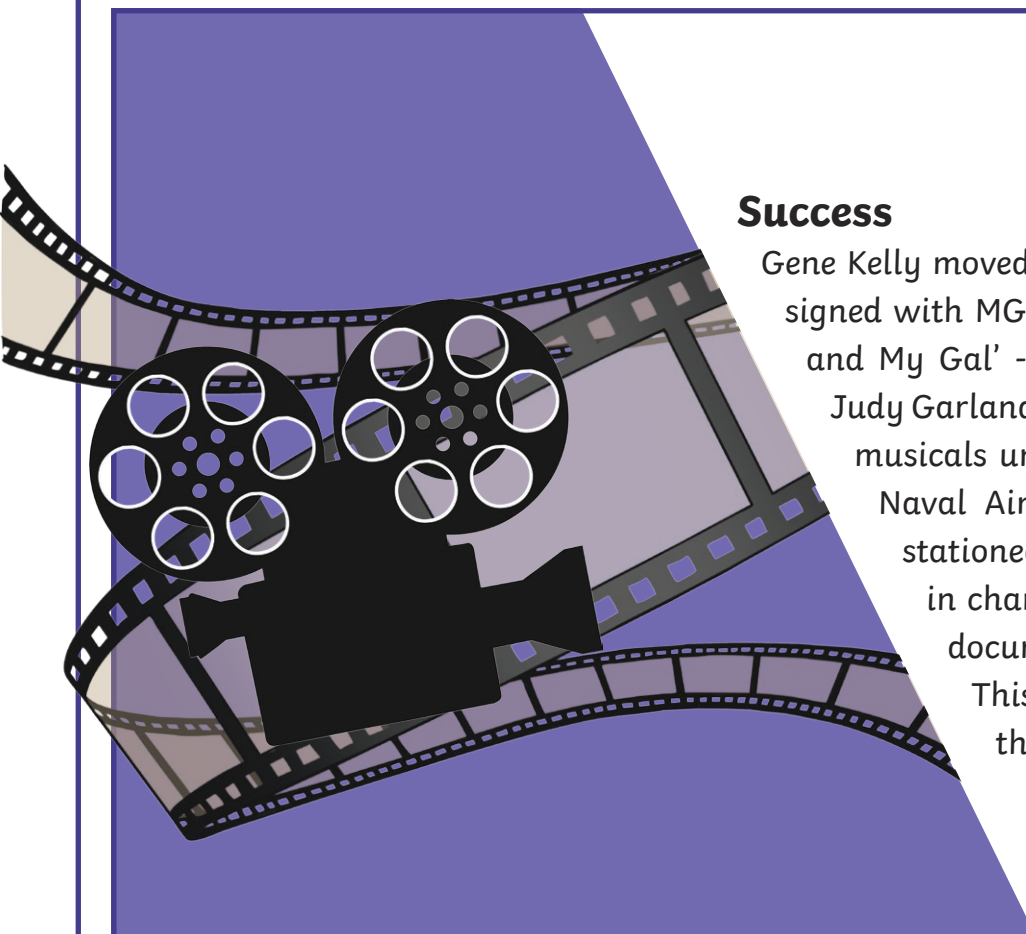
Gene Kelly was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the USA on the 23rd August 1912. His mother enrolled him and his brothers into dance class, which saw them teased a lot at school. However, he continued and began to teach dance classes to help him pay for college and university. He dropped out of his law degree to pursue his dreams of being a choreographer and entertainer. He moved to New York in 1937. Within a week, he had a job on the Broadway stage!

His big break came in 1940, when he starred in a musical called 'Pal Joey'. During his time in New York, he not only starred onstage but choreographed shows too. He was incredibly hard-working and soon Hollywood was calling his name.



Success

Gene Kelly moved to Hollywood in 1941 and signed with MGM. His first movie – 'For Me and My Gal' - featured the very famous Judy Garland. He worked on lots of movie musicals until he signed up for the US Naval Air Service in 1944. He was stationed in Washington and was in charge of writing and directing documentaries for the war effort. This job sparked his interest in the production of movies.





Achievements

In his next film, 'Anchors Aweigh', Gene Kelly starred alongside Frank Sinatra and was given more responsibility to choreograph routines. Not only did he dance with Frank Sinatra, he also danced with Jerry the Mouse (of Tom and Jerry). This was the first time that animation and live actors had been seen together on film. He made many iconic movies and even won an Oscar for his part in 'An American In Paris', but his most famous film is probably 'Singing in the Rain'.

Later Life

Gene Kelly loved to push the boundaries. He was fed up with male dancers always wearing suits and only doing ballroom routines with their leading ladies. He made dance more athletic, usually in very casual clothing and with everyday objects from mops to dustbin lids, and even tap danced in roller skates. He brought modern ballet to the wider movie going public by adding large ballet sequences to his movies.

As the 1950s movie musicals became less popular, Gene Kelly returned to directing and choreographing for both the stage and screen.

He died on 12th February, 1996 aged 83.

