

# The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley: Screen Classics

Busby Berkeley was a legendary Hollywood choreographer and director who revolutionized the way dance was presented on film. His elaborate and visually stunning dance sequences were a staple of movie musicals in the 1930s and 1940s, and his work continues to be admired and imitated today.



## Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley (Screen Classics) by Jeffrey Spivak

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

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## Early Life and Career

Berkeley was born William Berkeley Enos in Los Angeles, California, in 1895. He began his career as a dancer in vaudeville and Broadway shows, but he quickly made a name for himself as a choreographer. In 1930, he was hired by Warner Bros. to choreograph the dance sequences in the musical film "Whoopie!" This was the beginning of a long and successful

collaboration between Berkeley and Warner Bros., and it was during this time that he created some of his most iconic work.

## **Berkeley's Style**

Berkeley's dance sequences were characterized by their elaborate sets, intricate formations, and precision choreography. He often used hundreds of dancers, and he would often create complex patterns and shapes with their bodies. His sequences were also known for their use of special effects, such as smoke and mirrors. Berkeley's style was unique and distinctive, and it helped to define the look and feel of Hollywood musicals of the era.

## **Impact on the Film Industry**

Berkeley's work had a profound impact on the film industry. He helped to raise the status of dance in film, and he inspired a generation of choreographers and directors. His sequences were a major selling point for movie musicals, and they helped to make these films some of the most popular and successful of the era. Berkeley's work also had a lasting impact on popular culture, and his dance sequences have been parodied and imitated in countless films, television shows, and music videos.

## **Notable Films**

Some of Berkeley's most notable films include:

- Whoopee! (1930)
- 42nd Street (1933)
- Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933)

- Footlight Parade (1933)
- Dames (1934)
- Wonder Bar (1934)
- Gold Diggers of 1935 (1935)
- In Caliente (1935)
- Swing Time (1936)
- Varsity Show (1937)
- Gold Diggers of 1937 (1937)
- Hollywood Hotel (1937)
- On the Avenue (1937)
- Going Places (1938)
- The Gang's All Here (1943)
- Ziegfeld Follies (1946)

## **Personal Life**

Berkeley was married four times. His first two marriages ended in divorce, but he had two children with his third wife, Lorna Gray. Berkeley's fourth marriage, to Eleanor Powell, lasted until his death in 1976. Berkeley was a private person, and he rarely gave interviews. He was also known for his perfectionism and his demanding work ethic.

## **Legacy**

Busby Berkeley was one of the most influential figures in the history of Hollywood musicals. His elaborate and visually stunning dance sequences were a major selling point for these films, and they helped to make them some of the most popular and successful of the era. Berkeley's work also had a lasting impact on popular culture, and his dance sequences have been parodied and imitated in countless films, television shows, and music videos. Berkeley's legacy continues to inspire choreographers and directors today, and his work remains a testament to the power of dance to entertain and amaze.



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