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KST PRESENTS: Gene Kelly Birthday Celebration

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Join Kelly Strayhorn Theater for the sixth annual **Gene Kelly Birthday Celebration** on Saturday, August 23, 2–5 p.m. at Kelly Strayhorn Theater. Admission is pay-what-you-can.

The event — celebrating Kelly’s 102nd birthday — features complimentary cake, ice cream, and a screening of the award-winning 1952 film *Singin’ in the Rain* starring Gene Kelly, Donald O’Conner, and Debbie Reynolds. Co-directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donan, the film is a lively portrayal of Hollywood’s transition from silent films to “talkies”.

In 2000, East Liberty’s Regent Theatre changed its name to the Kelly Strayhorn Theater, in honor of famous Pittsburgh artists Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn.

Born in 1912, Gene Kelly grew up in the Highland Park neighborhood of Pittsburgh where he immersed himself in dance at an early age. Kelly attended the University of Pittsburgh and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in economics. To help pay for college he taught at his family’s dance studio in Squirrel Hill. That studio is now occupied by Maria Caruso’s Bodiography Center. After graduating from Pitt in 1933, Kelly choreographed at the Pittsburgh Playhouse and Nixon Theatre in Pittsburgh before moving to New York City and performing on Broadway.

A pioneer of his time, he pushed the genre by breaking down portrayals of masculinity in dance. In 1952, Kelly co-directed and starred in *Singin’ in the Rain*. A mixture of singing, acting, and dancing, *Singin’ in the Rain* is regarded as one of the best dance films ever made. Similar to Kelly’s legacy, the film reflects on adapting to the challenging landscape of art while celebrating the joys of performance.

“This is a fun family outing and a great opportunity to celebrate Pittsburgh’s impact on the arts, as well as East Liberty’s history,” says Janera Solomon, executive director of KST. “Our building, formerly the Regent Theatre, used to screen silent films and was considered one of Pittsburgh’s finest nickelodeons. We’re excited to recognize an important local icon and screen this remarkable film at KST.”

In addition to the cake and screening, audiences are encouraged to dress up in 1950s-style attire and bring their most outrageous umbrellas, in honor of the classic film scene.

East Liberty LIVE!

This event is part of KST’s **East Liberty LIVE!** summer series, sponsored by **PNC** and **Yelp Pittsburgh**.



Gene Kelly



Kelly Strayhorn Theater presents East Liberty LIVE! — a vibrant series of affordable and accessible summer arts programming. With a variety of dance, music, and film events throughout the summer, East Liberty LIVE! provides creative activities and innovative arts experiences for those who work, play, and live in the East End.

About the Kelly Strayhorn Theater

As the last of nine theaters from the 1950s heyday of East Liberty, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater uses the arts as a catalyst for continuing community revitalization. The theater, in its 12th season, continues to play a key role in the transformation of Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood. An intimate, professionally equipped, 349-seat multiple-use performance venue, the theater demonstrates its commitment to Pittsburgh artists and audiences. The KST is a favorite venue of emerging local artists, regional artists and arts organizations who take risks and present new work. Noted Pittsburghers Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn, the namesakes, are among the 80 area artists honored on the theater's Gallery of Stars. The building, opening in 1914, is the former Regent Theatre, which served the East End as a movie house for eight decades.

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