

Robert fosse



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Robert “ Bob” Fosse was an American dancer, actor, director, musical theater choreographer, screenwriter, film editor, and film director. Robert was born on June 23, 1927 in Chicago, Illinois. His parents are Cyril K. Fosse and Sara Alice Fosse. Robert is the fifth of six children. Robert’s birth name is Robert Louis Fosse. Some nicknames he had were Bobbie and Flash. He had started to take dance lessons as a child and was the only male in his class. Robert was considered a prodigy because he had performed on the professional vaudeville stage before reaching high school.

When Robert was about thirteen he joined with another male dancer forming The Riff Brothers. Within a couple of years The Riff Brothers were making a very good amount of money. When Robert was about fifteen years old he started to work at a string of burlesque houses as an emcee. He got to choreograph his first dance for a quartet of fan dancers. After this, he focused on high school until after he graduated. Robert joined the navy after graduating high school which was in 1945. He only served in the navy for two years. In those two years he went around entertaining different troops.

After being discharged from the navy, Robert moved to New York City where he met his first wife, Mary Ann Niles. There they formed a dance team which performed on a variety of television shows and on the musical stages. Mary Ann Niles and Robert Fosse divorced in 1951. In 1950, he debuted on Broadway in a revue called Dance Me a Song, and in 1952 he understudied for Harold Lang in the title role of Pal Joey. During that time he met a girl named Joan McCracken who was a dancer and an actress which he married in 1951. In 1953, Robert went to Hollywood signed a contract with MGM.

One of the three movies he was in that year was Kiss Me, Kate. He choreographed and danced a short but brilliant sequence with Carol Haney in the film, and that got him the attention of two of Broadway's most powerful producers, George Abbott and Jerome Robbins. After contributing choreography to another MGM musical, My Sister Eileen, Robert returned to New York to work on a new musical with George Abott. It was called, The Pajama Game. The Pajama Game was the first show fully choreographed by Robert Fosse and it was a major hit. Right after, Damn Yankees followed and that was where Robert met Gwen Verdon.

In 1956, Robert co-choreographed in Bells Are Ringing. Robert later realized that he needed to be his own director in order to have complete creative freedom. Here, his friendship with Gwen Verdon came to his aid. She talked about starring in her next show, Redhead, only on the condition that he would direct as well as choreograph. The added pressure and responsibility of directing on top of composing dances began to tell on him. It also might have had a bad effect on his health, for he suffered an epileptic seizure during a rehearsal for his next show, The Conquering Hero.

The producers decided to replace him with Todd Bolender, and Robert was devastated. The change did not help the show much. Meanwhile, another Broadway show that was in rehearsal at the same time, How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, was having problems with its choreographer Hugh Lambert. Robert was offered his job, and out of sympathy agreed to accept the title of musical staging director, only if Hugh Lambert was allowed to stay on board as choreographer. In 1962 Robert choreographed and co-directed with Cy Feuer in Little Me.

In 1964, he briefly returned to acting, but it was not long before he was back directing and choreographing for *Sweet Charity*. In 1969, *Sweet Charity* was made into a film with Robert directing, starring Shirley MacLaine in the Gwen Verdon's role. After two more films called, *The Little Prince* and *Cabaret*, Robert Fosse and Gwen Verdon went back to Broadway in the musical, *Chicago*, with Robert as book writer, director, and choreographer. One week into rehearsals for *Chicago*, Robert had a heart attack and had to undergo bypass surgery.

After directing and choreographing on Broadway, Fosse turned again to film, this time with his autobiographical, *All That Jazz*. His next and last film, the controversial, *Star 80*, was about the life and murder of Dorothy Stratten. *Big Deal*, Robert's last Broadway production as director and choreographer was something of a cynical story of his own success. In September 1987, *Sweet Charity*, directed by Robert Fosse and assistant-directed by Gwen Verdon, was being revived at the National Theatre in Washington, D. C. On September 23, 1987, just as the show was opening, Robert had a massive heart attack outside the theatre, and collapsed in his hotel room.

He died on the way to the hospital, and his death was announced to the cast after a standing ovation at the end of the evening. In 1999, a three-act musical revue opened on Broadway and Gwen Verdon served as the artistic consultant. It was called *Fosse*. Robert Fosse was inducted into the National Museum of Dance, in April 2007.