



NEW YORK CITY HOSTS GLOBAL DANCE CELEBRATION IN MAY 2014

5-DAY EVENT MARKS CENTENNIAL OF ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST DANCE INNOVATORS AND TEACHERS, FRANKIE MANNING, AND BRINGS HARLEM'S HISTORIC SWING DANCE "LINDY HOP" TO NEW GENERATIONS

(New York, NY – March 30, 2014) From May 22 to 26, 2014 over 2,000 swing dancers from 47 different countries will be descending on New York City to celebrate the 100th birthday of the late Harlem dancer Frankie Manning, known as the "Ambassador of Lindy Hop." The 5-day festival will feature big-band dances, performances, competitions, workshops, children's programs, educational panels and films celebrating Frankie Manning's legacy. The culmination will be a parade down Lenox Avenue in Harlem on Monday, May 26th, marking Manning's actual 100th birthday and the first annual World Lindy Hop Day. Simultaneous events in NYC—from midtown to Central Park to the world famous Apollo Theater—and throughout the globe will be linked together through live streaming online. Members of the public will be able to attend various events throughout the weekend, some free, and proceeds from any ticket sales will support scholarships and youth programs created through The Frankie Manning Foundation to foster the growth of Lindy Hop. Indeed, perpetuation of this great American dance is the overarching goal of the event, called "Frankie100", and bringing it to new enthusiasts around the world and back to Harlem will be one of its great achievements. Any individual ticket purchases will be available through the Frankie100.com website.



WHAT IS LINDY HOP?

For over a generation, Lindy Hop was a widespread form of American dance known to the public from the 1930s through 1950s and seen in clubs, ballrooms, wartime canteens, and campuses across the country. Lindy hop, the original member of the swing dance family, has experienced a strong and sustained global revival, especially in the past three decades. But its roots in New York City remain a focal point wherever the dance is enjoyed, making this dance one of the city's great exports. Indeed, Lindy Hop evolved in Harlem in the 1920s to early jazz, and in the 1930s, grabbing its energy and infectious joy from the swinging jazz of the big band (1935-45).

Revived in the 1980s by American, Swedish, and British dancers, Lindy Hop is now enjoyed by dancers throughout North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. It is that ever-widening circle of dancers, now of all ages and walks of life, who will come to New York City in May 2014 to celebrate the birth of one of its greatest figures. Most importantly, the organizers and participants hope to inspire yet another generation, or two or three, to learn what has been called America's greatest folk dance.

FRANKIE MANNING: FROM BALLROOM HOTSHOT TO FILM ROLES TO A ROYAL AUDIENCE TO A TONY AWARD

Moviegoers in the 1930s and 1940s would have seen a jaw-dropping African-American dance troupe called Whitey's Lindy Hoppers in a range of films, at the 1939-40 Worlds Fair, and in clubs, where they toured as far as South America and across Europe. New York City-raised Frankie Manning was one of the group's original dancers, choreographers, and its greatest innovator.

Frankie got his start at the Alhambra Ballroom, the location of the opening night party of Frankie 100, progressing to the Renaissance Ballroom before moving on to his base of the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. He was drawn to the Savoy Ballroom as a teenager by the superb swing bands and fabulous lindy hopping, Frankie soon took his talents on the road as a lead dancer and chief choreographer for Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, associated with some of its greatest, and more enduring innovations, such as acrobatic air steps and ensemble routines. He appeared in several films including *Radio City Revels with Ann Miller* (1937) and *Hellzapoppin' with Olsen & Johnson and Martha Raye* (1941), and toured the world with jazz greats Ethel Waters, Ella Fitzgerald, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, and Cab Calloway among others. While dancing in London in 1937, Frankie gave a command performance for King George VI. In 1941, "Musclehead" Manning was featured in a Life magazine article that highlighted his acrobatic brand of lindy.

With the onset of World War II, Whitey's Lindy Hoppers disbanded and Frankie joined the Army, where he saw active duty in the South Pacific. Upon his release from the military in 1946, he formed his own troupe, The Congaroo Dancers. This electrifying act toured with Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Tony Bennett, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Nat "King" Cole, and Sammy Davis Jr., and appeared on Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater* and Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town*. As the 1950s and rock 'n' roll moved in, Frankie could no longer find work as an entertainer, so he took a day job with the U.S. Postal Service. He married, raised a family, and danced socially, but for the next 30 years Frankie believed that his performing career was over.

In 1986, with the resurgence of swing dancing, Frankie was rediscovered. This living legend emerged to lead a new breed of jitterbug dancers, whose fascination with the lindy hop set Frankie globetrotting once again, spreading his dance magic through workshops, lectures, and performances. Also in 1989, Frankie received a Tony Award for Best Choreography in the Broadway hit musical *Black and Blue*. Frankie returned to Broadway in 1997 as Creative Historic Consultant to choreographer Mercedes Ellington for *Play On!* In 1992, Frankie served as dance consultant for and performed in Spike Lee's film, *Malcolm X*. With fellow lindy hopper Norma Miller, he choreographed and danced in *Stompin' at the Savoy*, an NBC made-for-television movie directed by Debbie Allen.

Frankie choreographed for numerous dance companies around the world including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballroom Theater, Zoots and Spangles (England), The Jiving Lindy Hoppers (England), The Rhythm Hot Shots (Sweden), and New York's own Big Apple Lindy Hoppers, for whom he served as artistic director and chief choreographer. As an international leader of the ongoing swing dance revival, he was interviewed for hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles, scores of documentaries and news programs, and a dozen books. In recent years, he was profiled in *GQ* and *People*. He was a highlighted dancer in the PBS special *Swingin' with Duke*, featuring the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, and was interviewed extensively on-camera for Ken Burns's acclaimed PBS documentary *Jazz*. His autobiography, *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop*, co-written by Cynthia R. Millman, was published by Temple University Press in spring 2007.

Frankie passed away on April 27th, 2009. Frankie's 95th Birthday Festival, a sold-out five-day event originally planned as a birthday celebration, was recast as a tribute to a man who was beloved by swing dancers the world over. The event has served, five years later, as the inspiration for this centennial gathering, which, seeks a broader audience through free elements and the use of technology to broadcast and link related programs. The ambassador of Lindy hop's fabulous dancing and radiant smile has served as inspiration to generations of Lindy hop enthusiasts, but he modestly claimed, "I'm not interested in fame and glory; it's just that I would like others to know what a happy dance this is."

ABOUT THE FRANKIE MANNING FOUNDATION

The mission of the Frankie Manning Foundation is to carry on the work and his spirit in spreading the joy of Lindy Hop, danced to big band swing music, throughout the world. In accordance with Frankie's values and those of the Savoy Ballroom, where the dance got its start, the fund seeks to promote projects that are grounded in unity and collaboration, and which enable people of all different backgrounds to participate in this joyous dance. These include a scholarship fund called the Ambassador Program, which recognizes that although the dance originated in Harlem, there is not a large participation of African-American dancers in the international Lindy Hop scene. The Foundation would like to support the growth and development of dancers and teachers who have roots in those communities and can help nurture an interest in Lindy Hop. There is also a Youth Initiative active in communities including New York City and Cleveland, that aims to enrich the lives of young dancers through free instruction and the opportunity to travel to and compete in an international Lindy Hop competition held annually in the Washington DC area. Through such events, they are inspired by dancing role models, but in turn deeply inspire all those present.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE EVENT AND PRESS CONTACTS

For more information please go to Frankie100.com. Details about local events—including those that are open to the public, simultaneous global programs, and live-streamed offerings—will be posted on this web site. Any individual event tickets will be available through Frankie100.com.

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Image caption: Whyte's Hopping Maniacs performing with "Le Cotton Club de New York" at the Moulin Rouge in Paris, summer 1937 (left to right Naomi Waller, Frankie Manning, Lucille Middleton, Jerome Williams, Mildred Cruse and Billy Williams)

USEFUL VIDEO LINKS:

Hellzapoppin' (1941) movie excerpt:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsxtGBMQGq4>

Killer Diller, Congaroos performance 1949: (permissions clear for use)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FF_K5FTasM