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April 29, 2009

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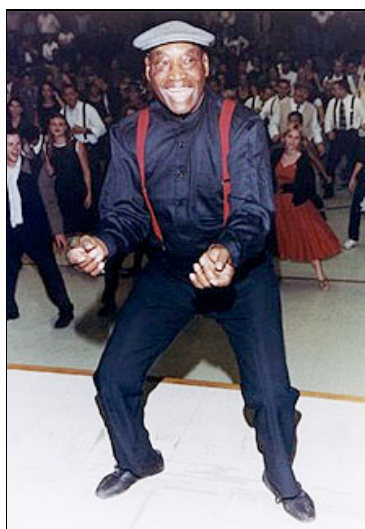


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Headlines: Tony-Winning Choreographer Frankie Manning Dies at 94

by Broadway.com Staff



Frankie Manning

Frankie Manning, a dancer and Tony Award-winning choreographer who pioneered the Lindy Hop in the 1930s, died from complications of pneumonia on April 27 in New York. He would have celebrated his 95th birthday on May 26.

Manning was part of a four-person team of choreographers (including Cholly Atkins, Henry LeTang and Fayard Nicholas) who won the 1989 Tony for their work on the musical revue *Black and Blue*. In 1997, he served as a creative consultant for the Broadway musical *Play On!* Manning remained active until his death and had been expected to participate in "FrankieFest 95," a gathering of more than 2,000 swing dancers from 30 countries to be held in New York in late May honoring his birthday.

Born in Jacksonville, Florida, Manning moved to Harlem with his family at age three and became a star dancer at the Savoy Ballroom as a young man, displaying an early talent at choreographing group numbers. He toured the world with a troupe called

Whitey's Lindy Hoppers in the late 1930s and early 1940s and choreographed numbers for their appearances in films such as *Hellzapoppin*.

After serving in World War II, Manning left the dance world in the 1950s to work at the post office. He retired 32 years later and donned his dancing shoes again in the mid-1980s as America experienced a revived interest in swing dancing. In addition to his work on Broadway, Manning choreographed and appeared in a number with Denzel Washington in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*. In honor of his 85th birthday in 1999, he danced with 85 partners at the Roseland Ballroom, where he had been turned away in the 1930s. His autobiography, *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop*, was published in 2007.

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Photo of Brian d'Arcy James by Andrew Eccles

Manning is survived by his longtime companion Judy Pritchett, sons Chazz and Frank Jr., daughter Marion, half-brother Vincent, seven grandchildren and nine great-

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