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Frankie Manning: Ambassador Of Lindy Hop



Synopsis

In the early days of swing dancing, Frankie Manning stood out for his moves and his innovative routines. This is his autobiography, recalling how his first years of dancing as a teenager at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom led to his becoming chief choreographer and a lead dancer for 'Whitey's Lindy Hoppers'. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

I have been a student and admirer of Frankie Manning's ever since my first dance lesson with him almost ten years ago. Frankie is a legendary dancer, an innovator and pioneer in the dance form called "Lindy Hop" that started in the Jazz Age in the streets of Harlem and continues to this day in clubs, schools and dancehalls all over the world. I've been hearing Frankie tell his inspiring stories for a long time now, but never with this rich detail and the larger historical context provided by Ms. Millman to back them up. From his days as a child at rent parties to the heyday of the Savoy Ballroom to performing internationally with the dance troupe Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, you follow the exciting growth of a young dancer. Then we follow Frankie into the war years and his dropping out of the swing world for several decades. Fortunately in the 1980s, Frankie is coaxed out of retirement and continues to do this day to teach and inspire others about this wonderful dance. Throughout it all, you cannot help but be touched by Frankie's grace, style and humor in navigating tumultuous, often racially-charged situations. I want to be Frankie when I grow up. A great read for anyone interested in African-American history, dance, or jazz.

Call me enthusiastic, but this is Frankie's story in his own words, therefore it's great. I just received my copy yesterday, and have been dipping into it slowly, savoring a man - and a spirit - that is to be treasured. Frankie himself is amazing for his ability to have been fully himself, and to have made his life's most powerful work be the expression of who he is through his art form, the dance. Yes, it's a treasure-trove of wonderful stories, at which Frankie is a master. And, the value of story-telling is the insights it gives on what it is to be fully human. I got to know Frankie in London and Sweden, and being able to sit and listen to him is, as Mickey Davidson says, the profound pleasure of sitting at the feet of the Elders. There is much wisdom in this man, as well as much fun. He has, as all great artists do, brought that wisdom, and his soul, into his work. He has, thereby, touched hundreds of thousands - if not millions - of people, dancers and non-dancers. It looks like Ms. Millman largely made the wise choice to let his words and his story take front and center. If you've heard him tell stories before, you can hear his voice - and his infectious laugh - come through the pages. This book is worth reading for anyone interested in knowing what decency and grace people are truly capable of, no matter what people around them are doing. If I have a gripe, it is that the end of the book (which talks about the resurgence of Lindy and Frankie in the '80s) does not truly do justice to how profound as well as international Frankie's reach has been. By simply being who he is and doing what he loves and does best, Frankie has been kept increasingly busy traveling around the world - to Australia, Japan, eastern as well as western Europe, throughout Asia - asked to share what he does and what he knows. There's no big celebrity machine grinding out PR and Marketing on him to set up these trips - dancers see or hear about him, are touched in some way by him, and want to know more about what he knows. So they call him up, and ask him to come to an event, and if he has time, you're in his schedule, solid. It's a simple process based on trust - he trusts you to do what you say, and you can count on it that he'll do what he's said. The picture on page 192 of Frankie dancing with Norma is worth the price of the book in itself, for having captured on Frankie's face the sheer joy that comes from connecting to the music, your partner, your body's capabilities for expressing all that words are inadequate for. Thank you, Cynthia, for getting him out there at long last.

I had the honor of working with Cynthia on editing the manuscript while it was still being formed. You can't even begin to imagine the work, years, love and passion she put into it...but it shows on every page (painstaking revision after revision after revision to get it just right). As many times as I have heard Frankie's stories in person, it was still a revelation to read the manuscript.. And each re-read it just got better! The book provides chronological insights and the complete story of

Frankie's many experiences on and off the dance floor (and yes, in the air!). It's a behind the scene look at a legendary life. It is a must read for swing dancers and a great read for every body else. I can't wait to read it again in bound copy and see all the great photos!!!! Hooray for Cynthia and Frankie!!!!

I was fortunate to have met Frankie twice before I read the book. This gave me the face and voice to put the words to. As I read, it was as if Frankie was there talking to me with all the wit , humor and charm he has in person. Frankie's excitement in telling his stories makes you wish you could have been there with him. Frankie does a wonderful job of taking you through his life experiences in a way that you just can't put the book down. For me the book is about much more than dancing Lindy Hop. It's about how to live your life which is finding your passion and becoming the best, not to become famous or rich, but because it gives you purpose and that gives others inspiration. Thanks for putting Frankie's life into words. He is someone I wish my kids, grand kids and all future generations could have met. I hope this book soon becomes a movie so all the world can once again see Frankie Manning on the dance floor.

Certainly, every Lindy Hopper must read this book. But I think it's a beautiful and important book for people outside of the swing dance community too. Frankie Manning was an unsung hero. He and the other members of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers helped were instrumental in a dance that shaped and influenced our culture and our history.

This is a book every Lindy Swing Dancer should read. If you love Lindy, you should know the history, and most of all, know who Frankie Manning is!!!! I've bought one for each of my dance helpers as gifts of thank you. I got mine the day it was released!

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