Villella, Edward (1936-) Encyclopedia Article

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A critically acclaimed principal dancer with the New York City Ballet company during the 1960s and 1970s, Edward Villella brought a virile athleticism to the classical ballet stage that challenged the stereotype of the effeminate male dancer and popularized ballet and its male stars among the general public. His passionate energy and exceptional technique inspired the great neo-classical choreographer George Balanchine to create many ballets and roles for Villella, including *Tarantella* (1964) and the "Rubies" section of *Jewels* (1967). Committed to increasing Americans' awareness of ballet, Villella also danced in Broadway musicals, performed at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration, and appeared frequently on television, in variety and arts programs and once, as himself, in an episode of the situation-comedy *The Odd Couple.* Injuries had forced Villella to stop performing by 1986 when he became founder and artistic director of the Miami City Ballet.

Further Reading:

Villella, Edward, with Larry Kaplan. *Prodigal Son: Dancing for Balanchine in a World of Pain and Magic.* New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992.