

For immediate release
Tuesday, May 6, 1975

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Ford

The President and Mrs. Ford have invited Edward Villella and Violette Verdy of the New York City Ballet to entertain Thursday, May 8, at the State Dinner honoring His Excellency The Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore and Mrs. Lee.

Villella and Miss Verdy will be performing a Pas de deux from the full-length Russian ballet: "Le Corsaire," composed by Drigo. This Bracura showpiece will be conducted by Robert Irving, conductor for the New York City Ballet. Music will be by the Chamber Orchestra of the U.S. Marine Band.

Villella and Miss Verdy danced at the Ladies of the Senate (Red Cross Unit) Luncheon Tuesday, April 22, 1975, which Mrs. Ford attended.

Villella, the New York City Ballet's 39-year-old principal artist, is recognized throughout the world not only for his skill as a dancer but as an athlete. He is known for his agility, strength, timing and grace.

The son of a Long Island trucker, Villella began dancing at the age of 9 and decided at that time he wanted to make a career of dancing. He earned a degree in Maritime Engineering at the New York State Maritime College. There he won a varsity letter in baseball and was also the school's welterweight boxing champion.

Villella joined the New York City Ballet in 1957 and became their principal artist in 1960, when he starred in a revival of Balanchine's "Prodigal Son." In 1962 he performed at the first anniversary of President Kennedy's Inauguration, performing with the Royal Danish Ballet.

He was named a member of the National Council of the Arts by President Johnson after the President and Mrs. Johnson saw him perform in New York.

Villella's roles with the New York City Ballet have included the lead in Jerome Robbins' "Watermill," "Brahams-Schoenberg Quartet," "Harlequinade," "A Midsummer Nights Dream," "Tarantella," "Giselle," "Romeo and Juliet" and "Swan Lake." He makes numerous television appearances and performs in concerts with symphony orchestras throughout the United States.

Villella performed at the White House in 1971 at a State Dinner honoring Prime Minister Indira Ghandi of India.

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Violette Verdy, who is French-born, is the principal ballerina with the New York City Ballet. She made her debut on stage in 1944, appearing with major French and European ballet companies. She has also done acting on stage, television and in films.

Miss Verdy appeared for the first time in the United States in 1953 with Roland Petit's "Ballets de Paris." As a guest ballerina with numerous international music festivals, symphony orchestras and companies, she has danced such full-length romantic ballets as: "Coppelia," "Nutcracker," "Giselle," "Swan Lake," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Romeo and Juliet."

She graduated from Skidmore College in New York in 1971 with a Doctor of Humane Letter Degree and from Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres in 1972 majoring in French Government. She has taught ballet in New York regional schools and is active in the School of American Ballet Scholarship Program. She is also the author of a book, Giselle, which was published in 1970.

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