

JEAN LOUISA KELLY TO HOST *AMERICA'S BALLROOM CHALLENGE*



The host of *America's Ballroom Challenge* is Jean Louisa Kelly, an actress, singer and dancer whose career has included many leading roles on television, in feature films and on the stage.

Ms. Kelly is best known for playing Kim Warner on *Yes, Dear*, the popular situation comedy that ran on CBS from 2000 to 2006. But she began her performing career as a child actor in stage musicals throughout New England and New York.

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Ms. Kelly grew up in a small town in the central part of the state. Her father was a high school English teacher; her mother, a music teacher. As a child, Jean Louisa took some kind of music lessons – voice, ballet, tap or jazz dance – almost every day of the week, and soon found her way into musical theater. She landed her first professional part at age 11: the title role in a production of “Annie” at Rhode Island’s Theatre by the Sea. At 15, she was cast as Snow White in the original Broadway production of Stephen Sondheim’s “Into the Woods.” And at 16, she landed her first movie role, starring as John Candy’s rebellious teenage niece Tia in John Hughes’ “Uncle Buck.”

After the movie, Jean Louisa took a break from acting, finished high school and enrolled at Columbia University in New York. There she resumed her acting career, appearing in television movies like “Breathing Lessons” (with Joanne Woodward and James Garner) and “One More Mountain” (with Meredith Baxter); as well as in undergraduate productions of “Our Town” and “The Fantasticks.”

After graduating from Columbia in 1994 with a degree in English literature, Ms. Kelly was hired for a series of television commercials in which she played an MCI operator always challenging AT&T; the job gave her the financial security to pursue an acting career. She got her next big break when she landed the part of Rowena Morgan, the star pupil and muse of the high school music teacher played by Richard Dreyfuss in “Mr. Holland’s Opus.” Her rendition of George Gershwin’s “Someone to Watch Over Me” was especially memorable.

In Michael Ritchie’s 1995 film version of the long-running off-Broadway musical “The Fantasticks,” Ms. Kelly again played Luisa, a role that showcased her dancing ability as well as her singing. In the late ‘90s, she had a series of guest roles on network television shows, including *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Law & Order*, and *Ally McBeal*. A recurring role as Nurse Diane on the NBC sitcom *Mad About You* led to her biggest role, starring alongside Anthony Clark, Mike O’Malley and Liza Snyder in the long-running CBS hit *Yes, Dear*.

Since *Yes, Dear*, Ms. Kelly has guest-starred in television shows like *Grey’s Anatomy* and *The Ghost Whisperer*; appeared in theatrical productions in Los Angeles and New York, and sung in benefit concerts to support research on AIDS, Alzheimer’s disease and breast cancer, as well as in a PBS tribute to children’s television pioneer Fred Rogers. She and her husband, James Pitaro, live in Los Angeles with their son, Sean, and daughter, Josey.