

Prima ballerina
MISTY COPELAND spoke
to Brunswick's **DAVID SUTPHEN** and
MALLORY MERGE about staying
true to her values and the
discipline that keeps her
career at center stage

DANCE

IN JUNE 2015, MISTY COPELAND broke one of the dance world's last remaining color barriers by becoming the first African American woman to be promoted to Principal Dancer in the American Ballet Theatre's 75-year history – just one remarkable step in an extraordinary career journey.

At age 13, comparatively old to begin ballet training, Copeland was discovered at the Boys & Girls Club in San Pedro, California. At the time, she and five siblings were living in a motel room with their single mother. By 2000, only five years later, she had joined the American Ballet Theatre's Studio Company. In 2001, she joined the main company's corps de ballet.

She was promoted to Soloist in 2007 and became the first black woman to dance the lead roles in classics such as *Firebird* in 2012 and *Swan Lake* in 2014. In 2009, she exploded onto

LESSONS

the pop culture scene as the star of a Prince video, capturing the attention of millions of new fans.

Copeland's artistic accomplishments allowed her to break new ground in the business world as well. She is the first ballet dancer to secure endorsement deals from brands like American Express, Dannon Oikos, Seiko and Under Armour. Her "I Will What I Want" campaign for Under Armour has garnered over 10 million views on YouTube to date.

White House honors, a one-on-one special with President Obama, and a bestselling memoir, *Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina*, have only bolstered her impact and influence. In 2015, *Time Magazine* named her one of the world's 100 most influential people. As a leading artistic trailblazer, her goal, she says, is to inspire and to open doors for the next generation.



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**DANCERS
HAVE NEVER
REALLY BEEN LOOKED
AT AS BUSINESS PEOPLE,**
but I feel like the potential that
we have as dancers is endless.
When we apply those tools
outside of our careers,
we can go on to become
literally anything

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I ABSOLUTELY LOVE WHAT I DO. But even bigger than that, I want to be able to create a path for more diversity, to bring African Americans into this culture and in this world. To give them hope that this could be a path for them as well. That's really the driving force behind why I wanted to succeed in the way I have

Copeland made her Broadway debut in 2015 at New York's Lyric Theatre, right, starring as Ivy Smith in "On The Town"



I'M NOT JUST ATTACHING MYSELF TO BRANDS TO MAKE MONEY. I want this to be a long-lasting career, but also a positive image for black women and for dancers, to create that opportunity for others

GROWING UP, I WAS SO INTROVERTED, AND SO COMPLETELY SHY - THERE WERE PEOPLE THAT MET ME THAT THOUGHT I WAS MUTE. Dance was really the first tool that I had to be able to communicate in a way that worked for me. And that taught me to communicate with my voice

I FEEL I'M JUST VERY HONEST ABOUT WHO I AM AS A PERSON. I try not to allow any brand I'm working with to change that. They really have to align with who I am

I'VE ALWAYS HAD THIS KIND OF WILL TO SUCCEED - and to bring my family with me. Watching my mother raising six children on her own - there was this kind of survival mode that we were in. To this day I have that in me

Copeland was featured in Under Armour's "I Will What I Want" campaign, above. The company underscored the dancer's role as a sponsor with messages such as, "The space between woman and athlete is no space at all"

DAVID SUTPHEN is a Partner in Brunswick's Washington, DC office, advising on Public Affairs, with a particular focus on technology, media, telecommunications and diversity. MALLORY MERGE is a former dancer and Project Manager for the Brunswick Review in New York.



PHOTOGRAPHS: JOAN MARCUS / UNDER ARMOUR / DARREN THOMAS / HENRY LEUTWYLER, GETTY

I WAS NOT AT ALL A RISK-TAKER WHEN I WAS A CHILD. I was as conservative as a person could be. I learned to take risks from being an artist. As a dancer, you can't grow if you don't take risks and put yourself in uncomfortable situations. And now, I've learned that as a businesswoman, you have to take some educated risks. But I'm definitely going to do the research and make sure I'm making the right decision

ART CAN CHANGE SOMEONE. It can give them tools that they can't get through anything else

Copeland performs
in *Swan Lake* at the
Queensland Performing
Arts Centre in
Brisbane, Australia

SOCIAL MEDIA IS AN INCREDIBLE PLATFORM FOR A VISUAL ART, to reach people that may not have the means or the exposure to it. A 15-second clip of someone dancing classical ballet can reach so many different communities and open their eyes

BEING AFRICAN AMERICAN, so few are given this opportunity - it's our responsibility to set an example and to give back in some way. But I don't think it's necessary to have to do it through your own voice. You can inspire people in other ways

