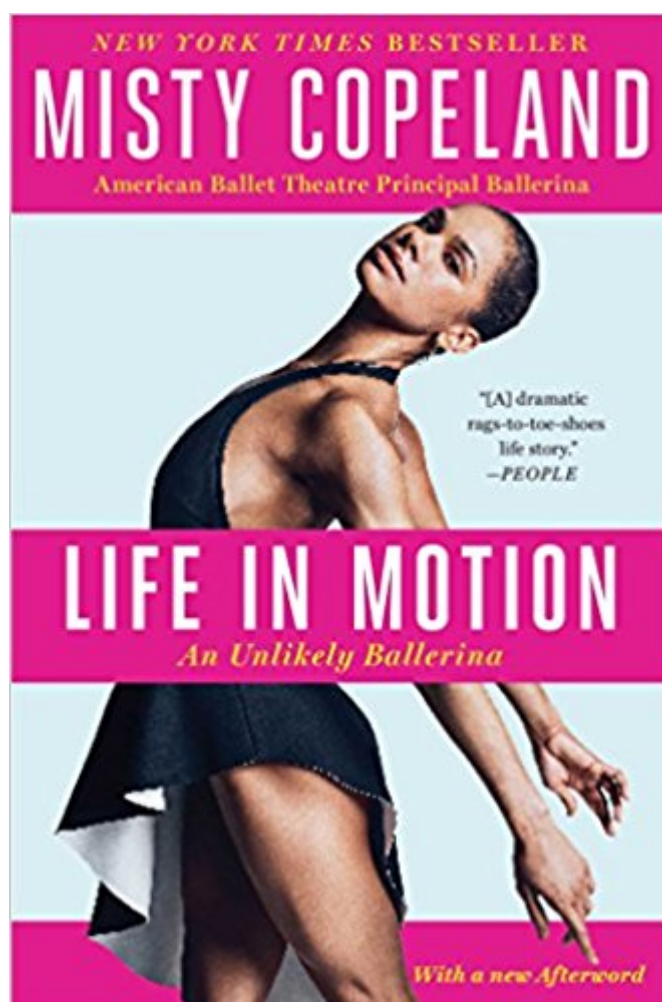


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# Life In Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina



## Synopsis

Determination meets dance in this memoir by the history-making ballerina. In this instant New York Times bestseller, Misty Copeland makes history, telling the story of her journey to become the first African-American principal ballerina at the prestigious American Ballet Theatre. But when she first placed her hands on the barre at an after-school community center, no one expected the undersized, underprivileged, and anxious thirteen-year-old to become one of America's most groundbreaking dancers. A true prodigy, she was attempting in months roles that take most dancers years to master. But when Misty became caught between the control and comfort she found in the world of ballet and the harsh realities of her own life, she had to choose to embrace both her identity and her dreams, and find the courage to be one of a kind. With an insider's passion, Misty opens a window into the life of an artist who lives life center stage, from behind the scenes at her first classes to her triumphant roles in some of the world's most iconic ballets. A sensational memoir as "sensitive" and "clear-eyed" (The Washington Post) as her dancing, *Life in Motion* is a story of passion, identity and grace for anyone who has dared to dream of a different life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Misty Copeland's story is an inspiring tale of overcoming a difficult childhood of poverty and rising en pointe to become a brilliant soloist with American Ballet Theater. Misty's drill instructor (she was captain of the drill team at school) advised her to study ballet at the Boys and Girls Club, which became her salvation. She started at the late age of 13. But she was a prodigy, with natural strength

sufficient to graduate to toe shoes after just three months of instruction. Ballet was her element, she became devoted to the art form, and was given unstinting support from the owner of the studio. She went to live with her teacher and her husband for two years, in the only stable and prosperous home she had known. But a custody struggle between her mother and her ballet teacher ended with Misty being returned to her mother. However, her talent and hard work won out, and she was accepted at every summer ballet intensive ballet she auditioned for (with the exception of New York City Ballet!). She moved from the San Francisco Ballet's intensive summer to American Ballet Theater's, and was immediately encouraged by the director of the studio company, a feeder to the professional company. The story of how Misty overcame the instability of her childhood and teenage years is told sensitively and with compelling interest. She is the first and only ballerina of color to reach soloist level in a classical ballet company, especially one of ABT's importance. All along she must overcome obstacles - of lack of confidence, of prejudice in favor of "white swans", and the universal ballet rule to have a boyish figure, while Misty was attractively feminine.

I've always loved Classical Ballet; I feel it's the most beautiful form of dance there is. It's something my wife and I share. When I met her she had a Mikhail Baryshnikov calendar on her wall. She danced when she was very young. She introduced me to Ballet and Artistic Gymnastics, both she had done in her youth. Sadly ended by injury. We both love to watch "So you think you can dance." as it brings some fantastic dancers to the stage and some of the wildest choreography I have ever seen. It brought us "Twitch"! This last season we were watching as usual and I noticed a guest judge I had never seen before and I asked my wife who it was. She asked me, "You don't know who that is?" I had no idea other than that she looked very serious. She said "That's Misty Copeland; one of the best ballerina's there is anywhere." I shrugged my shoulders, "OK." Her critiques were so precise and on point; every toe point; every movement; every emotion. I was like, "This dancer knows her business." I was impressed and I believe she was on for two episodes. My wife still was asking me how could you not know who she is? One thing I did know; she knows her business. The above notes don't relate directly with her book but will. I'm married to a Latina and she told me that she wasn't always welcomed in a lot of circles due to her not being white. Being white, I didn't fully get it because I wasn't raised that way. The statement "This is for the brown girls." should and probably relates to all women or men of color. Reading that made me sad but it should make every decent person sad. Her story was a great read.

When I picked up *Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina* by Misty Copeland, I was not familiar with

Misty's career or her life. I was drawn to the biography because of its subject matter: I've always loved ballet, and though I'm not a classical ballerina, I'm a dancer, too; and I relate very strongly to stories about prodigies and underdogs. Very strongly. I also loved the title, because I often say (or others have said about me) that I'm constantly in motion. Furthermore, as an example of how my life works, I wrote a play about ballerinas which made its debut the same week this book was released. For all these reasons and more, I was compelled to snatch up this book immediately and leap right in. What a remarkable, encouraging story. Written naturally, modestly, and conversationally, by the end of *Life in Motion*, readers will feel as if they know Misty personally - especially if they have endured similar hardships. As one of six children in a family that didn't have a lot of disposable income (if any), Misty was fairly content with her life. She loved her siblings, and she attended school faithfully - in fact, she was so afraid of being late, she was always an hour early to school. She loved dancing around her room to the radio, letting the music move her from the tips of her fingers to the tips of her toes. When she was in middle school, she tried out for the school drill team. Her affinity for movement, her flexibility, and her ability to pick up choreography quickly led her drill team coach to recommend that Misty take ballet classes at the local Boys and Girls Club.

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