

Misty Copeland as Keynote Speaker

Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony

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Monticello Announces Misty Copeland as Keynote Speaker at Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA — The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the private nonprofit organization that owns and operates Monticello, today announced ballerina and philanthropist Misty Copeland as the keynote speaker for its 62nd annual Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony. The event also celebrates the 248th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.



More than 50 individuals will take the oath of citizenship at Monticello on Independence Day.

Misty Copeland is a Principal Dancer with American Ballet Theatre, having been the first Black woman to be promoted to the position in the company's 75-year history in 2015. Ms. Copeland will be the first Black woman to deliver the keynote address at Monticello's ceremony.

An avid philanthropist, Copeland launched The Misty Copeland Foundation in 2022 with its first signature program BE BOLD, which aims to bring greater diversity, equity and inclusion to dance, especially ballet. She is an ambassador and alum of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Mind Leaps, a Rwanda-based arts program that helps young people get off the streets and into an academic setting to help enhance their lives.

"Ms. Copeland is an American icon whose journey embodies the entangled histories, and the principles of progress and unity that infuse Monticello," said Dr. Jane Kamensky, president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. "We are honored to have her join us in celebration of Thomas Jefferson's belief that immigrants are a source of strength for our country, contributing to the success

of our American experiment.”

This free, public ceremony begins at 9:00 a.m. Parking and shuttle bus transportation will be provided from Piedmont Virginia Community College to Monticello. For those that cannot attend in person, the ceremony will be livestreamed at www.monticello.org/july4, and on our YouTube and Facebook channels.

Since 1963, more than 3,900 people from countries around the world have sworn their oath of citizenship at Monticello. From Afghanistan to Zambia, these individuals have come to the United States for economic opportunity, family ties, love, refuge from crisis, and more. Their stories, shared with the audience, are powerful reminders of what it means to be an American.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to speak at Monticello on July 4. This event and its long tradition symbolize the strength we attain in blending unique cultures and identities,” Copeland said. “I look forward to welcoming our new citizens with open arms and hearing their stories that will now be a part of the American story.”

About Misty Copeland

Misty Copeland is a Principal Dancer with American Ballet Theatre, having been the first Black woman to be promoted to the position in the company’s 75-year history in 2015. She has performed some of the most iconic classical ballet roles, including Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*; Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*; Giselle; Manon; Coppelia; Kitri in *Don Quixote*; and *Firebird*, to name a few. Copeland made her Broadway debut in *On the Town* in 2015 and her major motion picture debut in Disney’s *The Nutcracker* and the *Four Realms* in 2018.

Copeland is an avid philanthropist and in 2022, she launched The Misty Copeland Foundation, with its first signature program BE BOLD, which aims to bring greater diversity, equity and inclusion to dance, especially ballet. She is an ambassador and alum of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Mind Leaps, a Rwanda-based arts program that helps young people get off the streets and into an academic setting to help enhance their lives.

Copeland’s production company, Life In Motion Productions, is focused on offering representative stories of artists-past, present, and future-and normalizing the arts experience for everyone. Her first independently produced project, *Flower*, is a silent arts activism film using dance to help raise

awareness about intergenerational equity. She is the New York Times bestselling author of several books, including *Life In Motion*, *Ballerina Body*, *Black Ballerinas*, *The Wind At My Back*, and picture books titled *Bunheads* and *Firebird*.

In 2021, Copeland was the recipient of the Spingarn Medal, the NAACP's highest honor and in 2023, she received the Trailblazer Icon Award at The Griot Awards, was named to The Root 100 list, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from New York University. In 2024, she received the Innovator Award from the African American Film Critics Association. Prior honors include Glamour's Women of the Year, Black Girls Rock! Awards, and Time 100 Most Influential People.

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation was incorporated in 1923 to preserve Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Today, the foundation seeks to bring history forward into national and global dialogues by engaging audiences with Jefferson's world and ideas and inviting them to experience the power of place at Monticello. Monticello is recognized as a National Historic Landmark, a United Nations World Heritage Site and a Site of Conscience. As a private, nonprofit organization, the foundation's regular operating budget does not receive ongoing government support to fund its twofold mission of preservation and education. For information, visit [monticello.org](https://www.monticello.org/) (<https://www.monticello.org/>).

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