American Masters
American Ballet Theatre at 75

Premieres nationwide Friday, May 15 at 9 p.m. on PBS (check local listings) in honor of the company’s 75th anniversary

TCA Biographies

**Ric Burns**
*Director and Producer*


In 2009, Burns completed *We Shall Remain: Tecumseh’s Vision*, part two of a five-part history of Native America, followed by the Emmy-nominated documentary *Into the Deep: America, Whaling & the World* in 2010. Both aired nationally as part of WGBH Boston’s *American Experience*.

Burns most recently finished *Death and the Civil War*, a film based on the best-selling book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* by acclaimed historian and Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust. The film examines the effects on American society and government of the Civil War’s unprecedented death toll and carnage. *Death and the Civil War* was first broadcast nationally on PBS on September 18, 2012, and was nominated for an Outstanding Documentary or Nonfiction Special Emmy Award.

Burns was educated at Columbia University and Cambridge University. He lives in New York City with his wife and two sons.

**Misty Copeland**

*American Ballet Theatre Soloist*

In 2007, Misty Copeland made history by becoming the third African-American female soloist and first in two decades at American Ballet Theatre (ABT). Born in Kansas City, Mo., and raised in San Pedro, Calif., Copeland began her ballet studies at the age of 13 — an advanced age to begin this traditional art form. Training at the San Pedro Dance Center, she was en pointe within three months. At the age of 15, she won first place in the Music Center Spotlight Awards (Los Angeles). She then began her studies at the Lauridsen Ballet Center in Southern California. Copeland has studied at the San Francisco Ballet School and American Ballet Theatre’s Summer Intensive on full scholarship, and was declared ABT’s National Coca-Cola Scholar in 2000. She has danced Kitri in *Don Quixote* and the Sugar Plum Fairy and Clara in *The Nutcracker*.

Copeland joined ABT’s Studio Company in September 2000, then joined American Ballet Theatre as a member of the corps de ballet in April 2001; she was appointed a soloist in August 2007. Her roles with the company include Gamzatti, a shade and the lead D’Jampe in *La Bayadère*, a leading role in *Birthday Offering*, Milkmaid in *The Bright Stream*, Autumn in Frederick Ashton’s *Cinderella*, Blossom in James Kudelkas’s *Cinderella*, Swanilda and the Mazurka Lady in *Coppélia*, Gulnare and an odalisque in *Le Corsaire*, Mercedes, Driad Queen, the lead gypsy and a flower girl in *Don Quixote*, *Duo Concertant*, the Masks in Christopher Wheeldon’s *VIII*, the Firebird in Alexei Ratmansky’s *Firebird*, Flower Girl and lead Can-Can in *Gaité Parisienne*, the peasant pas de deux in *Giselle*, Lescaut’s mistress in *Manon*, Columbine and one of the Nutcracker’s sisters in Alexei Ratmansky’s *The Nutcracker*, a Gypsy in *Petrouchka*, the lead Polovtsian Girl in the Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor*, the Saracen Dancer in *Raymonda*, a Harlot in *Romeo and Juliet*, Princess Florine, the Fairy of Valor, in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Odette-Odile, the pas de trios, a cygnet and the Hungarian Princess in *Swan Lake*, the Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux, a leading role in *Bach Partita*, and roles in *Airs, Amazed in Burning Dreams, Baker’s Dozen, Ballo della Regina, Birthday Offering, Black Tuesday, The Brahms-Haydn Variations, Brief Fling, Company B, Désir, Gong, Hereafter, In the Upper*.
Room, Overgrown Path, Pretty Good Year, Private Light, Raymonda Divertissements, Sechs Tänze, Sinatra Suite, Sinfonietta, Thirteen Diversions, Within You Without You: A Tribute to George Harrison and workwithinwork. Copeland created the Spanish Dance in Ratmansky’s The Nutcracker and leading roles in C. to C. (Close to Chuck), Dumbarton, Glow – Stop, One of Three and With a Chance of Rain.

Copeland was a recipient of a 2008 Leonore Annenberg Fellowship in the Arts and a 2014 Dance Magazine Award. She serves on the advisory panel of ABT’s Project Plié and is the National Youth of the Year Ambassador for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. She was inducted into the Boys & Girls Club National Hall of Fame in May 2012. Copeland is the author of Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina and the illustrated children’s book Firebird.

Copeland has been featured in numerous publications and television programs. As further evidence of her broad appeal, she was handpicked by Prince to star in his “Crimson and Clover” video and was special guest artist at his concerts in Nice, France, Madison Square Garden and the Los Angeles Forum. Her past and present endorsements include BlackBerry, Proactiv, Payless, Capezio, Sansha, Boys & Girls Club, Lavazza Coffee and Under Armour. She has served as a guest judge on So You Think You Can Dance (FOX) and starred in Under Armour’s women-focused ad campaign “I Will What I Want,” which became a viral hit. She resides in New York City.

Kevin McKenzie
American Ballet Theatre Artistic Director

Kevin McKenzie was a leading dancer with both the Joffrey Ballet and the National Ballet of Washington before joining American Ballet Theatre (ABT) as a soloist in March 1979. He was appointed a principal dancer the following December and danced with the company until 1991. A native of Vermont, McKenzie received his ballet training at the Washington School of Ballet. In 1972, McKenzie was awarded a silver medal at the Sixth International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria.

As a principal dancer with ABT, McKenzie danced leading roles in all of the major full-length classics, including Solor in Natalia Makarova’s full-length production of La Bayadère, Don José in Roland Petit’s Carmen, the Prince in Mikhail Baryshnikov’s production of the full-length Cinderella, Franz in Coppélia, the Gentleman With Her in Dim Lustre, Basil and Espada in Baryshnikov’s Don Quixote (Kitri’s Wedding), Albrecht in Giselle, a leading role in The Garden of Villandry, Her Lover in Jardin aux Lilas, the male lead in The Leaves Are Fading, the Friend in Pillar of Fire, the leading role in Raymonda (Grand Pas Hongrois), a featured role in Requiem, the Champion Roper in Rodeo, Romeo and Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet, Prince Desire in The Sleeping Beauty, Prince Siegfried in Swan Lake, James in La Sylphide and leading roles in Other Dances, Paquita, Les Sylphides, Sylvia Pas de Deux and Theme and Variations. He created Amnon in Martine van Hamel’s Amnon V’Tamar and a leading role in Clark Tippet’s S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.
During his performing career, McKenzie appeared as a guest artist throughout the world, including Spoleto, Italy, Paris, London, Tokyo, Havana, Moscow, Vienna and Korea, dancing with the London Festival Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet, the National Ballet of Cuba and the Universal Ballet in Seoul, among others. In September 1989, McKenzie was appointed a permanent guest artist with The Washington Ballet and, in 1991, assumed the position of artistic associate. He has also acted as associate artistic director and choreographer with Martine van Hamel’s New Amsterdam Ballet.


Michael Kantor

American Masters Series Executive Producer

For more than two decades, award-winning filmmaker Michael Kantor has created outstanding arts programs for television. He joined American Masters as the series’ executive producer April 30, 2014.

His most recent PBS documentary series, Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle, hosted by Liev Schreiber, premiered in fall 2013 and was nominated for an Emmy Award. Random House published the companion book. In January 2013, Kantor’s Peabody Award-winning, 90-minute film, Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy, aired as part of the Great Performances series on PBS. Narrated by Joel Grey, it included performances by Matthew Broderick, Kelli O’Hara, David Hyde Pierce, Marc Shaiman and many other Broadway talents. In 2012, Kantor produced The Thomashefskys: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theater with Michael Tilson Thomas, which aired on PBS and was nominated for a Primetime Emmy. Kantor served as executive producer of the 90-minute special Give Me the Banjo, hosted by Steve Martin, and created Make ’Em Laugh: The Funny Business of America, the critically acclaimed six-part documentary series, hosted by Billy Crystal, that debuted in January 2009. His script for episode four, When I’m Bad, I’m Better: The Groundbreakers, co-authored with Laurence Maslon, was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award. His landmark six-part series Broadway: The American Musical was hosted by Julie Andrews and honored with the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Nonfiction Series in 2005. That same year, he created three hours of DVD extras for 20th Century Fox’s 40th anniversary release of The Sound of Music.

Kantor wrote, directed and produced the award-winning profile American Masters: Quincy Jones: In the Pocket. With Stephen Ives, he co-directed Cornerstone: An Interstate
Adventure for HBO, and produced The West (Executive Producer Ken Burns). His 20 years of work in documentaries include projects as varied as EGG: the arts show, Coney Island, The Donner Party, Margaret Sanger and Ric Burns' New York series. As a writer, Kantor created Lullaby of Broadway: Opening Night on 42nd Street, co-authored the companion books to Broadway (Bulfinch) and Make 'Em Laugh (Grand Central Publishing) and has published numerous essays and articles. He is president of Almo Inc., a company that distributes The American Film Theatre series, which includes Edward Albee’s A Delicate Balance (starring Katharine Hepburn), Eugene O’Neill’s The Iceman Cometh (Lee Marvin) and Chekhov’s Three Sisters (Laurence Olivier) among its titles. Kantor has served as a Tony nominator and teaches documentary filmmaking at the School for Visual Arts in New York City.

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