

Skaters' Edge™

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SUMMER 1993

PLIÉ POWER!

BY ROB MCBRIEN
DEMONSTRATED BY JAMES SCHILLING,
ROB MCBRIEN, ROBIN WAGNER, AND
KENNY MOIR (*in order of appearance*)

Plié Power Workshops are the evolution of a format I learned from John Curry while I was Ensemble Director for his company of skaters. I have been teaching the workshops to skaters of all levels since 1986, when I became Artistic Director of the Ice Theatre of New York (ITNY). The classes are a valuable and fun way to develop and add depth to skating skills.

On-ice class work consists of combinations of moves—such as edges, crossovers, turns, pirouettes, and stops—that are skated on precise patterns set to music. These footwork sequences are done by four skaters traveling as an unison ensemble down the ice in a technique known as “birding” (moving like a flock of birds).

Skating in close unison while maintaining a consistent distance from other members of your “flock” is a distinct and challenging skill; it requires being able to project the other skater’s curve. When done with speed, it is exhilarating and

can initially be frightening. My favorite one-liner on the subject came from a workshop student who, while lamenting her group’s attempt, said, “We know, Rob. That wasn’t birding. It was herding!”

THE FOUR BASICS

One of the most valuable things about Plié Power Workshops is their introduction to what I call the “Four Basics” of skating. If someone woke me in the middle of the night and asked, “Rob, what are the four basics of skating?” I would probably mumble, “Forward outer edge, forward inner, back outer, back inner.”

After coffee and a moment to think, though, I would realize that there are basic body movements which create these first edges. Thus, the four basics are about the body

(See *Plié Power*, page 4)



Ice Theatre of New York performers demonstrate Plié Power exercises during a free performance at the Rockefeller Center.

PHOTO BY ALICE BERMAN

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LETTERS

SKATING FANS

In a previous issue, you printed some addresses. I was wondering if you could please give me the addresses of a few others. I would like to be able to reach **Petr Barna**, **Robin Cousins**, **Lloyd Eisler**, **Viktor Petrenko**, **Scott Davis**, and **Michael Chack**. Thank you very much. You have made me very happy!

Kristi Luetkemeier
Springfield, VA

Note: You can write **Robin Cousins** at P.O. Box 461970, Los Angeles, CA 90046; **Lloyd Eisler**: c/o CFSA, 1600 James Naismith Drive, Gloucester, Ontario, K1B 5N4, Canada; **Scott Davis** and **Michael Chack**: c/o USFSA, 20 First Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80906. **Viktor Petrenko** and **Petr Barna**: letters c/o the USFSA will be forwarded to their home Federation.

I was wondering if you could write an article on what different skaters are doing now? Some of the skaters I am interested in are: **Robin Cousins**, **Liz Manley**, **Katarina Witt**, **Caryn Kadavy**, **Debi Thomas**, and the **Carruthers**. Also, I was wondering if **Jill Trenary** will ever compete in the Olympics, or does her foot keep giving her troubles? Did **Barbara Underhill** have two girls or two boys? And what are their names? Will she skate again? If so, when?

My last question: *Will Carmen on Ice* with **Brian Boitano** and **Katarina Witt** come out on video? It was on cable long ago, but I don't have cable and I want to see it. Thank you for answering my questions.

Lauren English
Olney, MD

Note: *Skater's Edge* does not plan to do articles on what different skaters are doing, except for occasional short blurbs in our News column. Other

(Continued on page 8)

DEAR SKATER:

The skating world is in the midst of tremendous change. Who would have thought a relatively unknown 15-year-old **Oksana Baiul** would win the World title? Or that **Torvill and Dean** would return to compete in the 1994 Olympics? Things will be very interesting to watch this year, with people like **Brian Boitano** skating in regional qualifying competitions, and so many Olympic Champions vying for berths on 1994 Olympic teams. For a run-down on who's doing what, read **NEWS**.

This issue's cover story should present you with a challenge, regardless of your level of skating! Plans for writing this article date back to last spring, when I took my first *Plié Power* workshop at a local rink. I attended another workshop during the joint **PSGA/CFSA** conference in Ottawa last May, and lasted about five minutes on the ice with 100+ pros before realizing I was *not* able to keep up with them. I felt like a bowling pin—if I went down,

I'd take everybody with me! I moved aside and vowed to learn more about what they were doing so I could share it with you. Enjoy!

... It's hard to believe this issue marks the end of our second year of publication. It's amazing how fast the time passes. (For many of you, it is time to renew your subscription. If the date on your address label is 08/31/93, this is your last issue. Use the form on page 11 to renew.)

Some of our readers have asked if we plan to do profiles of some of the more popular skaters (see **LETTERS**). For a variety of reasons, we plan to keep our focus on the how-to aspects of skating, with upcoming articles on jumping techniques, interpretive arm movements, buying blades, and more.

Alice Berman

Alice Berman
Publisher

Skater's Edge™

Skater's Edge is written for people who love to ice skate. Subscriptions cost \$18.00 in the U.S. for five issues per year; \$25.00/U.S. in Canada; \$30.00/U.S. in Australia and Europe; and \$30.00/U.S. in Japan. Send subscriptions and correspondence to: *Skater's Edge*, Box 500, Kensington, MD 20895; Phone/FAX: (301) 946-1971.

Publisher & Editor: Alice Berman
News Editor: Julia Ridgely
Publications Assistant: Ilana Berman
Subscriptions: Rose Bailey

Advisory Board: Don Bachlott; Joel Berman, DM; Mike Cunningham; Cecily Morrow; Sharon Myers-Jordan; Ron Ludington; Robert Neeves, PhD; Nancy Neupert; Catherine Roberts; Howard Silby, MD; Holly Martin Townsend

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Publisher's note: The information contained herein is educational in purpose, and is not intended as a substitute for professional advice. The exercises and other suggestions in this publication are offered only as general guidelines; please use caution when trying anything new. A physician should be consulted before starting any new exercise program.

SKATING TIP

Roll Around A Tree

When stepping from a back outside to a front outside edge (reverse mohawk), many skaters instinctively lean forward. This causes them to “break” at the waist, and changes how their weight is balanced over the blade. This can present a recurring problem in the *European Waltz*, which consists almost completely of three-turns, back edges, and stepping forward to do another three-turn.

If a skater's weight is not centered over the blade properly throughout the back edge/step forward sequence, it is very difficult to do the three-turn that follows. In order to prevent the problem, I tell my students to “Roll your back around a tree” during the change from the back edge to the step forward.

This simple image keeps the shoulders from coming forward, avoids breaking at the waist, and keeps the skater's weight properly centered over the blade throughout the sequence. It also helps each dance partner maintain independent control during the respective three-turns, rather than holding each other up or “throwing” each other through the turns. ■

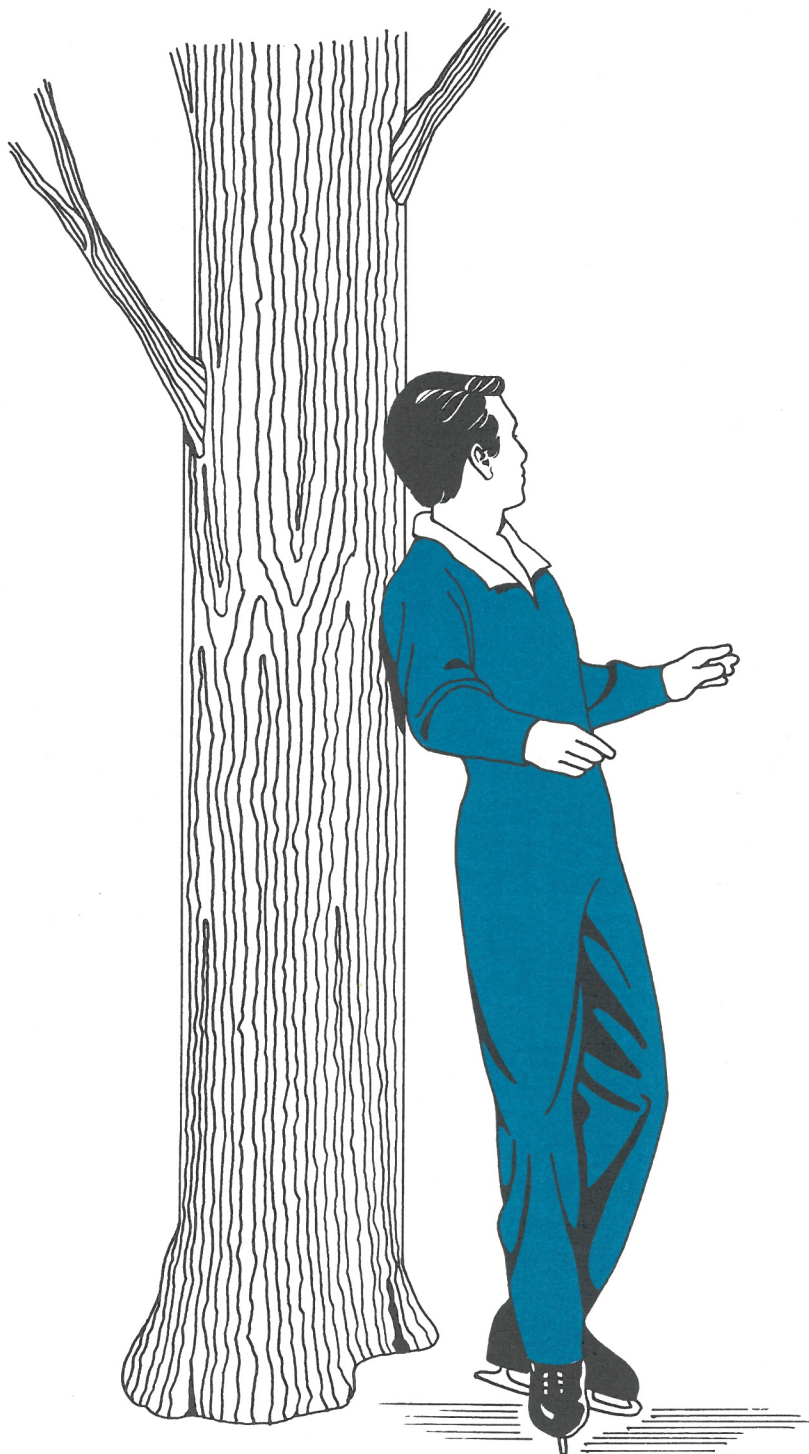


ILLUSTRATION BY MARTHA VAUGHAN

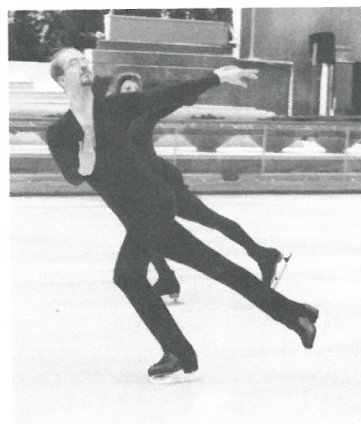
Provided by Don Bachlott, Bethesda, MD. Don is a dance and freestyle pro teaching in the metropolitan Washington area. He competed in dance at the national level in 1968 and 1969, and has been teaching since 1970.

(*Plie Power, from page 1*)

control necessary to create mastery of edges. This mastery makes successful athleticism possible, and eventually leads to artistry or “dancing” the ice movement. These four basics are:

(1) *The plié*: The fold of the shin bones forward over the tongue of the skate boot, bending both knees and ankles while keeping the knees lined up correctly over the toes. The plié transmits body weight into the ice.¹

(2) *Carriage of the free leg*: The lift energy, extension, and precise placement of the free (or “unemployed”) leg in any movement on ice.



Using the four basics

(3) *Twisting*: The carriage of the back and use of the upper body in counter-tension to the lower body. Virtually all turns and edges require twist. When the lower back is held firm and flat, not arched or collapsed, it provides a still place from which the twist can emanate. All emotion is transmitted from this still center.

(4) *The eyes*: The fluid and easy use of the eyes at many levels. In true balance, when all the basics are integrated, the eyes are alert and free. In great skaters, the eyes lead. Jayne Torvill is a master of this.

The four basics are the same for all skaters; all four are involved in any ice movement. The first basic, the plié, is the same movement whether done by six-year-old Suzy or Olympic Champion Brian Boitano. Brian just does it better, thanks to years of hard work and understanding. Improving any one of the four basics immediately improves a skater's total picture and helps strengthen the impression an audience receives.

For me, these four basics hold a kind of *magic*. They are all about making the most of your individual potential. Each of them, taken to the skater's own limits, creates a very pure balance. A skater truly into the plié—or “into the ice,” as we've always called it—attains a very real agility that is about total body intelligence.² These are the skaters we love to watch; we never worry for them.

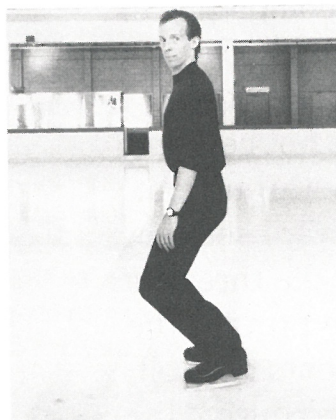
Each student will have strengths and weaknesses within the four basics. Because the four basics are all inter-related, a skater can work on one or more to improve

other, weaker areas. For example, a skater with advanced free leg work but poor plié, poor “dig” into the pushes, will probably need to work through twisting and lower back lessons to improve connection to the boot and knee bend.

THE FIRST BASIC: THE PLIÉ

“Bend!” How many times has this been shouted through a cold fog? If only it were that simple! As in life, the basic things are often the most complex: the fold of the shin bones forward over the foot can seem truly “elusive in the heat of battle.” The plié is dependent upon everything above it, but it is with this simple bend that body weight is conducted into the ice.

The amount of plié possible for each individual skater is determined by the angle of the shin/foot relationship, which is set by the length of the Achilles tendon. This angle is found only when the hips are held upright as the knees drop down and forward. (The inclination of the hips forward that is necessary for the sit spin, for example, occurs after the full plié; this should be inhibited in plié strengthening work.)



The first basic: the plié

In the final analysis, the amount of plié possible actually determines a skater's potential. Jumping is more difficult for skaters with very long Achilles tendons; skaters with an over-short tendon structure will probably never achieve the smoothness on ice that is the hallmark of great skating.

A note on injuries: I have worked with skaters suffering from tendinitis in the

Achilles tendon. It is fairly common among advanced skaters. I find that inflammation can result from unclear body messages (when opposing muscles are in conflict) in the plié. A skater may seem to bend, but actually the skating foot is flexing and the front of the foot is lifting as the knee comes forward. This flexing inhibits the drop of weight into the tongue and sole of the skate boot, and causes the shin muscle to contract instead of stretch. The tendon—which is not elastic—is forced to resolve the conflict and eventually becomes inflamed. Or shin-splints (pain felt in the shins) may develop. Skaters should unflex their feet every day.

Exercises that best develop the plié are backward movements. When skating backwards, it is easier to trust the full drop forward of the shin bones and the support of the toes used flat against the sole of the boot. When skating forward at speed, even an advanced skater fears the “classic fall”—the weight going too far forward, over the toe picks. Juicy back crossovers, spirited back inside edges on small curves, back changes of edge on one foot—these are the exercises that develop plié best.

¹Plié is the French word meaning to bend or fold. It is the most basic ballet movement. In skating, the plié focuses the compression of the weight against the ice before the explosion of the push or jump.

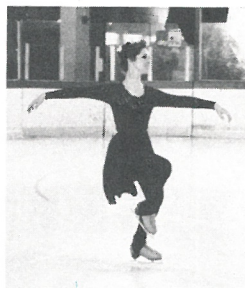
²Total body intelligence means that every cell is participating in the balance. There aren't some cells trying to do the move, and some trying not to do it. Little kids who can jump two ropes that are being crisscrossed are an example of total body intelligence.

THE SECOND BASIC: THE FREE LEG

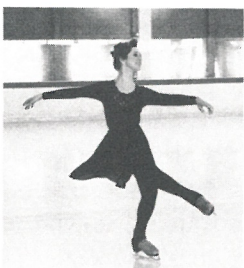
The body achieves force to create edges largely through counter-tension and torque of the free leg. The free leg should almost always be held with strong contracted energy and must be lifted away from the ice, not dropped down toward it. Extreme reaches of the free leg, both front and back, are essential to advanced edging because they create the counter-tension necessary to achieve lean. By reaching way out with the free leg during an extreme edge lean, the skater creates a balanced center.



Free leg extension



Passing to front



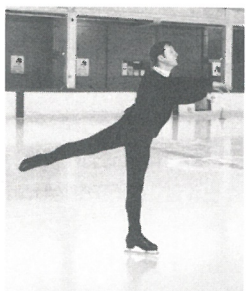
Proper free leg position in front

Ballet plays an important role here: the exercises developed to articulate turnout and lift energy in ballet apply directly to ice

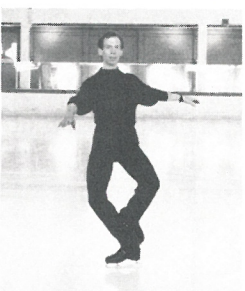
skating. A serious skater (above intermediate freestyle or pre-silver dance) who is *not* taking ballet is missing an important time-saving device. The work done in ballet class can save a valuable ice-hour that could be used to focus on other things. Until the early 70s, free-leg articulation and control were an important part of patch practice. But the current de-emphasis of school

figures has deprived many skaters of that route.

Exercises to develop free-leg strength begin with edge rolls, especially the forward inner edge roll performed with a full presentation of the leg back to front (photos above). The free leg position in the back should be mastered on a simple low arabesque in a ballet second (or "checked") position. Care should be taken to place the free leg directly behind in line over the tracing, not to the outside or inside of the circle.



Arabesque



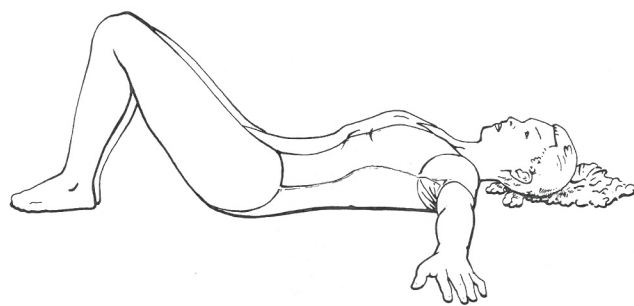
Coupé position

To develop proper free leg positioning in front, practice doing forward changes of edge on one foot, keeping the free leg

over the tracing in front. Spirals are also good for developing free-leg strength, as they demand extensive lift energy. The coupé position should be mastered for free leg control in mohawks, choctaws, pirouettes, and some threes.

In this era of very stiff boots, it is easy to lose sight of

PELVIC TILT



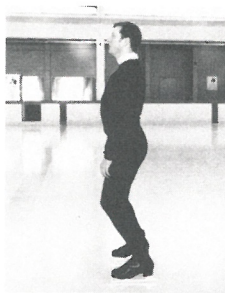
To get a feel for what a "flat" back feels like, try doing a pelvic tilt on the floor. Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles to flatten the small of your back against the floor. Relax and repeat. After you are familiar with how this feels, try assuming the flat back position while standing in front of a mirror. Then take it to the ice.

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL CASEY

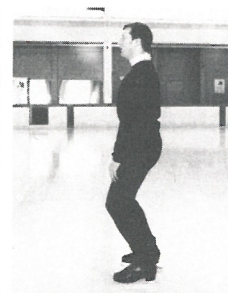
the need to point the toes in any free leg position. Pointing the toes solidifies free leg energy, and is essential for advanced work. Some boots are so stiff that no matter how hard a skater tries to point the toes, the boot won't yield. It's like trying to write with an oven mitt on your hand!

THE THIRD BASIC: TWISTING

By twisting the upper body against the hips, skaters can create deep edging and turns. Virtually every ice movement involves fluid transitions between twist left, twist right, and the square position. Traditionally, twist is taught by positioning the arms. However, by initiating twist from the center—from movement of the lower ribs—the skater gains very real strength and an impression of economy of movement. In a great skater, like John Curry, the transition between movements is so internal, so integrated, that it disappears—you don't see it happening. For efficient twist movement,



Incorrect posture



Correct flat back

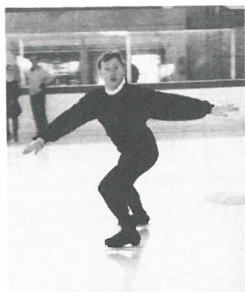
the lower back must be held as straight and flat as possible (see "Pelvic Tilt"). Shaping the psoas muscle³ in a concave rather than a convex position is the key to main-

taining this posture. Athletes with "natural" talent usually have this lower back shaping integrated into daily posture. Skaters with lordosis (sway back) can't achieve the body axis that is essential for advanced work. Crunches (see "Strengthening Exercises," Summer 1992, page 8) and

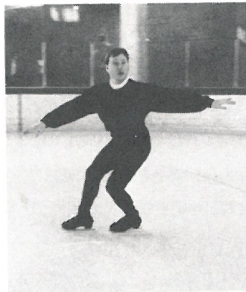
³The psoas muscle, which flexes and medially rotates the thigh, is attached to five vertebrae in the lower back and ends in a tendon that is attached to the femur bone in the thigh.

sit-ups, done with awareness, can help to train necessary muscle groups for lower back strength.

Twisting can be studied in back crossovers. The arms should be held over the projected circle, and the front (or tummy) arm must push toward the ice as the head pulls up

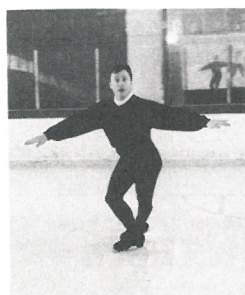


Twist from center



Pull head up

and away. The front arm should be held slightly lower than the arm extended to the back. This helps the spine remain straight and



Maintain twist

creates the pressure necessary to turn the hips. If the arms are reversed, with the front arm higher than the back, the skater begins to fall back. This is a very common mistake.

Bauer three-turns (successive forward outside threes) are a good exercise for quick, economical twist action. Any of the mohawks or

choctaws can be fashioned into a sequence that highlights twisting skills. (See "Connecting Moves," Jan/Feb '92, pages 6-8.) Oddly enough, perhaps the best exercises for twist are the edge stops, all four of them: back outer, back inner, forward outer, and forward inner. Without proper twist, the blade resists shaving the ice. With good abdominal and lower back control, even the back outer stop becomes easy.

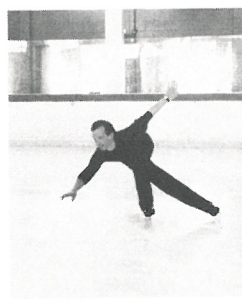
THE FOURTH BASIC: THE EYES

The final basic is the use of the eyes. The eyes are a reflection of the skater's inner core of balance. Fluid eye and head movements are the hallmark of great skating. A truly accomplished skater is free to move the eyes from low on the ice to high in the stadium. A mediocre skater is usually stuck with a more limited range, and a beginner often has trouble looking up from the ice.

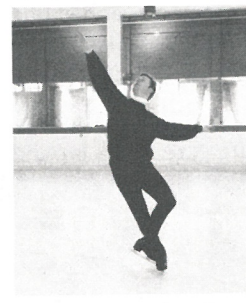
Many people look down when they skate. I think this is the body's way of trying to offset the loss of lower back strength. To avoid falling backwards, the eyes cast down, attempting to pull the total balance over the front of the foot. When the eyes are held up at a middle level, total balance improves dramatically. It can be scary to do this. But it is like jumping into cold water: once you're in, it's fine!

Skaters should develop movement sequences for them-

selves that involve major changes of eye level. Try working through exercises you know while moving through low, medium, and high projections with your eyes. For instance, start an inner edge roll while looking straight ahead, and as the edge comes around, tip your head and look up. Let your



Low eye level

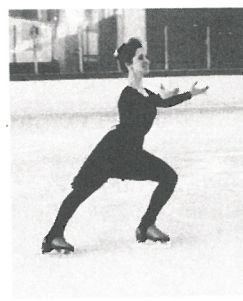


High eye level

eye movements actually begin to guide your skating, allowing yourself to be led into positions related to the level of your eyes. It's really

a kind of improvisation.

Try watching your favorite skater and observe how he or she takes advantage of this basic skating component. Then watch other skaters. If you lose interest in their skating, most likely their eye levels stay within a limited range.



Medium level

Eyes come into play during every practice session. People skating with their eyes cast down are a hazard to themselves and others. The ones who do look up often seem frustrated that other people get in "their" way. My suggestion: look at the session inside/out. Rather than looking at the other skaters, look at the spaces between them. The open space is always evolving and changing. If you skate into the open spaces, you will feel free in the session. If you concentrate on watching the other skaters, seeking to avoid them, you are almost always drawn to them. Look and skate into space.

USE THE BASIC FOUR

Think of these four basics as components of an overall equation; they need continuous work to add depth to your skating. Notice which ones are weak for you, and practice to bring them up. If you improve a single aspect of one of these four basics each time you skate, you will quickly notice your whole edge skill improve. Push toward your own limits with each of these basics: your deepest plié, your most pointed toes, most lifted free leg. This effort brings your body into grounded balance.⁴ It is from this foundation that artistry on ice can begin to grow. ■

Rob McBrien, originator of the Plié Power Workshop, is currently Artistic Director of the Ice Theatre of New York. He served as Ensemble Director for the John Curry Skaters throughout the company's world tour. In addition to being a USFSA Gold Medalist, he holds a degree in Theatre Arts from Northwestern University, and has been acting and directing professionally in New York since 1972. He has privately coached such renowned skaters as John Curry, Judy Blumberg, and Michael Seibert.

⁴Grounded balance is when the body weight is conducted into the floor (or ice) and achieves what is called "grounding" in martial arts. In Tai Chi, if your weight is on both feet at the same time, you are "ungrounded" and easier to knock over. If your weight is on one foot, you are "in the ground."

ICE THEATRE OF NEW YORK

The Ice Theatre of New York (ITNY) was co-founded in 1984 by Moira North (a former Canadian ice dance champion) and others to establish figure skating as a performing art. Modeled on the structure of dance or theatre companies, ITNY is the first ice dance company to receive funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the NY State Council on the Arts.

Ice Theatre has four primary aims: (1) the creation of a popular repertory of skating performance pieces; (2) the training of an ensemble of skilled professional skaters; (3) educational outreach to professional and recreational skaters of all ages; and (4) establishment of a fully equipped performing arts facility for ice dance. The company has been giving free community performances since its inception, and has presented free noon-time concerts at the Rink at Rockefeller Plaza since 1986.

The company currently conducts over one hundred Plié Power Workshops throughout the U.S. each year. The workshops form the basis of the company's Summer Apprentice Program, and are offered as residency activities when the company performs on tour. The workshops are also available through some summer school programs, and can be arranged on a local basis. ITNY offers other workshops as well, including improvisation classes and off-ice classes (ballet, circus arts, and more). For more information, contact: **Moira North**, Director, Ice Theatre of New York, 450 West 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001; (212) 239-4320.

Thoughts on Plié Power

BY ALICE BERMAN, PUBLISHER

In our cover story, Rob McBrien outlines some basic components of his Plié Power workshops. I've participated in several different versions of the class, and thought I would share some of what I've learned.

The following exercises are included to give you something to play with—but they can't begin to replace the benefits gained by taking the workshop. To start, just try to get a feel for doing a plié:

(1) Align your body over your skates with the correct posture (pay attention to the lower back). Stand with your feet about a foot apart, the middle of each foot directly under the corresponding hip, blades parallel to each other, toes facing forward. Knees should be aligned so that when they bend, they do so forward out over the skates, not dropped in or out. Your head and torso (hips and shoulders) should face forward, arms down at the sides, relaxed.

(2) Plié/Push. As your knees and ankles bend, start to reach your arms out to the sides, lifting slowly. While maintaining the parallel blade position, push your legs out to the sides, feeling as if the thigh and abdomen muscles are lifting as you allow your weight to push down into the ice. Your feet will get further and further apart as you push. Lift the arms and legs as far away from the body as you are able to without letting anything collapse. (Note: This movement is not related to a swizzle or sculling, where the feet and legs turn in and out.)

(3) After you've reached your widest point, begin drawing the legs together, keeping your legs straight and your blades parallel. Remember the center of energy—the control—is from your abdomen and lower back.

(4) Repeat for the length of the rink. For advanced skaters, two or three strong pliés should carry you the length of the ice.

Get as much power, push, and

(Continued on next page)



Ice Theatre performers doing the above plié/push exercise.

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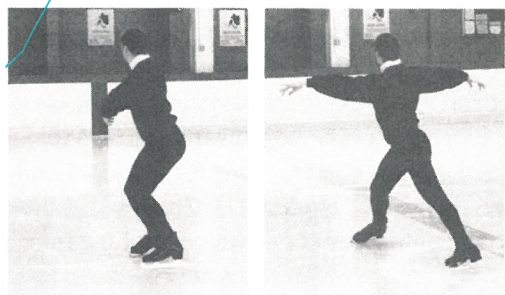
control from each plié as possible. Try skating the exercise in unison with a friend, keeping the same spacing and tempo for the length of the ice.

Once you can do this basic plié exercise with both power and control, add the following twisting action for a lower back workout. These maneuvers can be done in either direction. In the following pictures, Kenny Moir is skating backwards.

(1) Start as before, with arms relaxed and down to the side. Plié/push, reaching your arms straight out to the sides, palms down, as you glide forward. The arms travel in one fluid motion (as do the legs); they do not hold in any one position.

(2) As you draw your feet together, "gather" your arms from the sides in front of you. Hips and feet continue to face forward.

(3) From the gathered position, plié/push. As your legs push apart, twist your upper body and "present" your upper torso and opening arms to an imaginary audience on the right. Look up into the bleachers with your eyes. At the widest point of the glide, your upper body is fully twisted so



your arms form a straight line with the shoulders, parallel to the barrier.

(4) As you draw your legs together (blades remaining parallel), release your twist to face forward, gathering your arms in front again.

(5) Plié/push, twist and "present" yourself to the left.

Reach out to the audience with your eyes.

(6) Repeat the length of the rink.

Practice the following basic exercise for correct positioning and extension of the free leg:

(1) Start out as before, feet parallel and torso facing forward, but with the arms stretched to the sides, slightly in front of the body.

(2) To gain some speed and flow, plié and stroke onto the right, then left, then right again.

(3) Draw up in the skating knee, standing tall. Bring your feet together, parallel. Glide (do not push) onto the



left foot and lift your right leg. Extend it as much as you can (without tilting the hip), directly in line behind the right hip, free foot turned out, pointed. Simultaneously, reach forward with your right arm while your left arm continues reaching

out to the side. Both palms face down. Your head continues to face forward, and your eyes look up, beyond your right hand in front. Glide for the length of the rink.

(4) About three-fourths the way down the rink, plié on your skating leg and hold to the end of the rink, maintaining a straight line throughout.

(5) Repeat on the other foot, starting with three strokes: left, right, left. Glide briefly, then lift the left leg, extending the position as you glide the length of the rink. Your left arm reaches forward; your right arm stays out to the side.

These are some of the basic Plié Power movements, and are almost always included in the warm-up and strengthening routine for Ice Theatre performers. Actual workshops involve a variety of turns, edges, and other moves skated in time to music and as part of a unison "birding" group. ■

(Letters, from page 2)

publications covering that aspect of skating: USFSA's *Skating* (address on page 2); *Blades on Ice* (7040 N. Mona Lisa, Tucson, AZ 85741); & *American Skating World* (2545-47 Brownsville Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15210).

We'll try to answer a few of your questions, but have limited time and resources: (1) **Barbara Underhill** and **Rick Gaetz** had twin girls, born Sept. 15, 1992, and named Stephanie Elizabeth and Samantha Shirley. Barbara is already back in training. (2) **Jill Trenary** is currently performing with the "Tour of Champions," and is not planning to return to amateur compe-

tition; (3) Beginning in June, **Robin Cousins** will star as Munkustrap in the London Production of CATS (see NEWS); the show will run until Nov. 10th. (4) **Debi Thomas** is attending medical school at Northwestern outside of Chicago and has retired from skating; (5) **Caryn Kadavy** recently won her first title by placing first in the ProAm competition held in Los Angeles. She plans to be married this summer. (6) **Katarina Witt** is doing television commentary, and has been granted reinstatement as an amateur; we may be watching her compete in the 1994 Olympics. (7) **Peter Carruthers** has been doing TV com-

mentary, recently for the Pro Am competition, and for Turner Broadcasting during the '92 Olympics.

Carmen on Ice has been released on video in Europe, but not in the U.S. The rights are held by HBO, which may re-broadcast it over cable, but has not made plans to release it as a video. According to the programming department, the film is not scheduled for broadcast in May or June. You can send letters to: HBO, Consumer Affairs, 1100 Sixth Ave., New York, NY 10036. *Note:* According to **Dale Mitchell**, Director of the World Figure Skating Museum, the TV version actually cut 30-40 minutes from the original film.

NEWS

OKSANA BAIUL FIRST IN 1993 WORLDS

Pulling an unexpected upset, fifteen-year-old Oksana Baiul of Ukraine took the women's title at the 1993 World Championships in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in March.

Baiul is the youngest world champion since Sonja Henie in 1927. She began skating at the age of four, just after her father died. Following the death of her mother from cancer in 1990, Baiul lived as an orphan at her skating club. In 1992, she moved to Odessa to live and train with Galina Zmievskaya, who coached Viktor Petrenko to his Olympic Gold; Petrenko has helped provide financial support for Baiul.

Second place in the women's championship was taken by Surya Bonaly of France. Chen Lu of China won the bronze medal for the second year in a row, and fourth went to Japan's Yuka Sato. The U.S. champion, Nancy Kerrigan, came in fifth place. The only other U.S. woman to compete, fifteen-year-old Lisa Ervin, finished 13th. Tonia Kwiatkowski did not get past the qualifying rounds.

Canadian Kurt Browning won the Gold, claiming his fourth World title; fellow Canadian Elvis Stojko came in second. Alexei Urmanov of Russia took third, bumping American Mark Mitchell to fourth place. U.S. Champion Scott Davis finished sixth.

Canadians also took the pairs title, as Isabelle Brasseur and Lloyd Eisler won their first World Gold. Second place went to Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer of Germany, and third was taken by Russians Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov. Czechs Radka Kovarikova and Rene Novotny came in fourth, followed by the newly-paired American team of Jenni Meno and Todd Sand. National Champions Calla Urbanski and Rocky Marval



Oksana Baiul

finished eighth.

European Dance Champions Maia Usova and Alexandr Zhulin won the Gold. Fellow Russians Oksana Gritschuk and Evgeni Platov came in second, and another Russian team, Angelika Krylova and Vladimir Fedorov, took third. American Champions Rene Rocca and Gorsha Sur were allocated to a disappointing eleventh place. Because an American team did not place in the top ten slots, only one American dance team will be able to compete in the Olympics next year.

The U.S. won no medals in the '93 Worlds, the first time since 1962-64 (the years following the plane crash that killed the entire figure skating team enroute to the 1961 Worlds, also in Prague). Consequently, America will send its smallest figure skating team to the Olympics since 1976, when ice dancing was added as an event: two men, two women, three pairs teams, and one dance team.

FIGURE SKATING EARNS HIGH TV RATINGS FOR CBS

Olympic figure skating is right up there with the Super Bowl and NFC and AFC championship games when it

comes to television ratings, according to the 1992 Sports Programming Top 35 List. Of the top ten events, CBS coverage of skating events for the 1992 Winter Olympics came in 5th, 6th, and 7th. The top ten list follows:

Rank	Event	Rating	Share
1	Super Bowl XXVI	40.3	61
2	NFC Championship Game	29.5	53
3	NFC Divisional Playoff	27.4	50
4	AFC Championship Game	27.4	58
5	Olympics: Ladies Finals	25.0	40
6	Olympics: Pairs Short Program	23.5	39
7	Olympics: Ladies Short Program	22.8	35
8	NCAA Championship Game	22.7	41
9	World Series Game #6	22.7	35
10	Monday Night Football	22.3	36

The *rating* is the percentage of TV households (households owning TVs, regardless of whether they are being watched at the time) tuned into that program. At the time of the '92 Winter Olympics, one rating point was equivalent to 921,000 TV households (the current rate is 931,000 TV households per rating point). Thus, in 1992, a rating of 25.0 represents 23,025,000 TV households tuned into the program.

A *share* refers to the percentage of TV households watching television at that time. Of the TVs in use at the time, the share is the percent who were watching that particular show. The Ladies Finals earned a share of 40, meaning that 40% of all households watching TV at the time of the broadcast were tuned into the Ladies Finals event.

ROBIN COUSINS TO STAR IN CATS

British Olympic Champion Robin Cousins is returning to his hometown of Bristol to star in a new production of CATS, Andrew Lloyd Webber's popular musical. Cousins will sing and dance in the role of Munkustrap during his big-stage debut at the Bristol

(Continued on next page)

NEWS

(Continued from page 9)

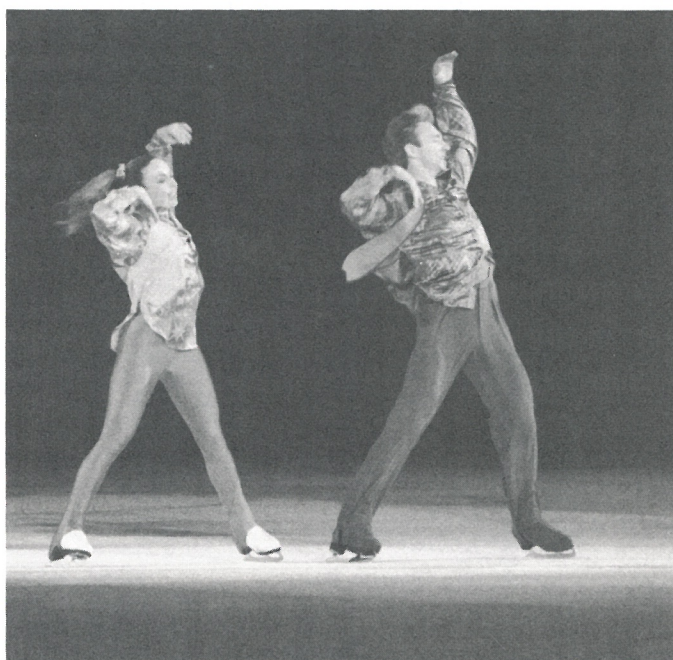
Hippodrome. The show will run from June 28 to Nov. 10, 1993. For more information, call the Bristol Hippodrome at 011-44-272-265524.

Cousins recently gathered some of the world's finest skaters to perform in "Skate for Life," an AIDS benefit to raise money for some of leading British AIDS charities. Among those scheduled to skate in the May 15 tribute—which was produced, directed, and choreographed by Cousins—were: Bestemianova and Bukin, Kurt Browning, Gordeeva and Grinkov, Dorothy Hamill, Scott Hamilton, Brian Orser, Kristi Yamaguchi, and Cousins himself.

All the skaters donated their performances. The event will be shown on British TV (BBC2), is expected to be broadcast in the U.S. as a special later this year; watch your local TV schedules.

NEXT ICE AGE PERFORMANCE

The Next Ice Age, an interpretive skating ensemble based in Baltimore, MD, held a fund-raising performance on May 1 to help pay for sending a troupe of six skaters to perform in the star-studded AIDS benefit in London (see above). The show, which drew a standing-room only crowd, included three original pieces by Nathan Birch. The first work, entitled *Cosmic Messengers* (music by Jean-Luc Ponty), was a complex ensemble piece involving six skaters and interspersed with brief solos. It will be performed again in London. The second piece, set to music by Debussy, was eleven minutes of spell-binding skating performed by a quartet. Last, but not least, was a



Torvill and Dean plan to compete in the '94 Olympics

charming and hilarious interpretation of *The Sinatra Suite*.

Birch, who choreographed Dorothy Hamill's *Nutcracker on Ice*, recently received a \$20,000 two-year choreography fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He is the first skater to receive such an award (this is his second NEA grant).

Skating were Nathan Birch, Tim Murphy (recently named Skating Director for the *Ice Capades* by new owner Dorothy Hamill), Lea Ann Miller, Cathy Foulkes, Cindy Stuart, Gabriella Galambos, and JoJo Starbuck.

REINSTATING PROS CHANGE FACE OF 1994 OLYMPICS

The rule change that allows previously ineligible skaters to be reinstated and compete has already changed the face of the 1994 Olympics, to be held in Lillehammer, Norway, next February.

Sometimes called the "Boitano Rule" because of Brian Boitano's outspoken support of the changes, the new rule requires the skater to apply

for reinstatement through his or her country's governing body, and then the International Skating Union (ISU). A skater may be reinstated only one time.

Among those who have already applied or plan to apply for reinstatement:

Brian Boitano
Christopher Bowman
Ekaterina Gordeeva & Sergei Grinkov
Natalia Mishkutenok & Artur Dmitriev
Viktor Petrenko
Renee Roca & Gorsha Sur
Jayne Torvill & Christopher Dean
Katarina Witt
Susan Wynne
Elaine Zayak

Due to the reinstatement deadlines, pros who were reinstated could not compete in the regional competitions last fall. This season, and in the future, a reinstated pro will be required to enter necessary qualifying competitions in order to compete in the U.S. Championships, Worlds, or the Olympics.

Feelings about the fairness of reinstatement are mixed. U.S. Silver Medalist Mark Mitchell has expressed unhappiness with the rule changes.

1994 USFSA NATIONALS TO BE HELD IN DETROIT

The 1994 United States Figure Skating Championships are being held at the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit, MI, on January 4-9. The competition will serve as the trials for the 1994 Olympics, with the top winners travelling to Norway to represent the U.S.

All-event tickets, which include admission to over 30 events and all practice sessions, cost \$165 before June 1, 1993. The price jumps to \$200 after June 1. Tickets for individual events will also be sold.

NEWS

Hosted by the Detroit Skating Club, the 1994 National Championships will overlap the schedule for the International Car Show, one of the largest car shows in the world. Organizers suggest making early room reservations to avoid potential space shortages. For more information or to order tickets, contact:

1994 U.S. Skating Championships
30800 Telegraph Rd., Suite 2835
Birmingham, MI 48025
1-800-241-1994

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For those of you who love to travel and dance for a weekend, here's a tentative schedule for the summer and fall. Call the number given for details.

City	Dates	Phone
Boston, MA	May 28-30	(617) 782-5900
Anchorage, AK	June 4-6	(907) 561-0062
Detroit, MI	June 18-20	(313) 332-7133
Peoria, IL	July 16-18	(309) 682-1332
Baltimore, MD	Aug 6-8	(410) 882-5844
Mariposa, Ontario	Aug. 20-22	(416) 569-3958
Minneapolis, MN	Aug 20-22	(612) 935-8514
Princeton, NJ	Sept 25-27	(609) 695-4298

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