

The Cutting Edge

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*Ice
Theatre
of
New York*

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Ice Theatre of New York Celebrates 15 Years of Innovation on Ice



ITNY ensemble in "Cabaret Manana".

May 20, 21 and 22 are the dates for our 15th Annual Home Concert. This concert marks our fourth season at Sky Rink at Chelsea Piers, and once again we're presenting another great evening consisting of newly commissioned choreography and music for ensemble and solo skaters along with some of our old "crowd pleasers" as well.

The Ice Theatre Ensemble will premiere new works by dance choreographers Peter di Falco and JoAnna Mendl Shaw. Our ensemble director Doug Webster will present a new work, as will founder/director Moira North. Di Falco, renowned for his Tango and ballroom choreography, has brought his artistry to the ice for the fabu-

lous, sexy, and dramatic **Tango Images**, skated to music from the film 'The Tango Lesson.' The piece features a duet skated by Judy Blumberg and Doug Webster, as well as other duets, trios and the full seven cast members. Shaw returned to the ice again this year to choreograph a new work entitled **Heart**. In this luscious quartet, she has explored and embraced the unexpected and the uncomfortable to create a physical and passionate dance vocabulary for the ice. Doug Webster's **Transitions** is a tribute to all the people that the skating community has lost to AIDS. It is structured as a four-movement piece featuring Chris Nolan as a man confronting his own mortality. North's **Sketches**, one of five movements from a ballet based on the art of sculptor Auguste Rodin, is set to original music by Cam Millar, who has previously composed music for JoAnna Mendl Shaw and the Ice Theatre. Both Shaw's new dance and Millar's music were made possible, in part, with commissioning funds from the New York State Council on the Arts. Other favorite repertory appearing on this year's program include Shaw's **A Conversation with Angels**, a parable about "everyman" yearning for passion, wisdom, and immortality, and the festive **Cabaret Manana**, a piece recalling an era of madness and mayhem.

Guest artists appearing on the program include David Liu, Katherine Healy and Emanuel Sandhu. David, a competitor in the 1988, 1992, and 1998 Olympic Games, will be skating his new piece **Deflecting Demons**. The beautiful Katherine, whose years of highly disciplined training in the arts of both ballet and figure skating have made her skating a treat for us all, continues to embody grace, strength, and beauty on the ice. And we are pleased to present Emanuel Sandhu, the recent Canadian Senior Men's Silver Medalist, who is now being compared to the late, great skating artist John Curry.

Please join us for one – or all three – nights. The performances begin at 7:00 p.m., and tickets can be purchased in advance through Sky Rink (212-336-6100). Tickets are \$15; \$12 for group sales of 10 or more.

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The Director's Report

Ice Theatre has been extremely productive on all fronts this season. We hope that many of you will join us for the culmination of these efforts in our Home Season performances, May 20-22 at Sky Rink.

With all its continued challenges I still strongly believe in Patrick Hourcade's prediction that "artistic ensemble skating will doubtless be among the most delightful discoveries of the 21st Century." On the edge of the millennium I look back on all the talented skaters, choreographers, board members, volunteers, students, teachers and staff who have contributed to the continuation and growth of our wonderful Ice Theatre company and I want to thank each and every one of you. We have accomplished so much because it has been a collective and collaborative process...I hope that you will follow us into the next century!

SOME OF OUR SEASON'S ACTIVITIES

Ice Theatre participated in a television shoot in Finland in March. Thanks to Automatic Productions and Windham Hill for our Arctic Circle adventure! Watch for us on Arts and Entertainment's "Winter Solstice On Ice" next November.



Skaters taking a break at the "Ice Bar" in Kemi, Finland.



Kristen Vanorski, Doug Webster, Tian Yi Zhang, Emanuele Ancorini, Lisa Bell, Chika Maruta skating for a special Lake Placid event at Rockefeller Plaza.

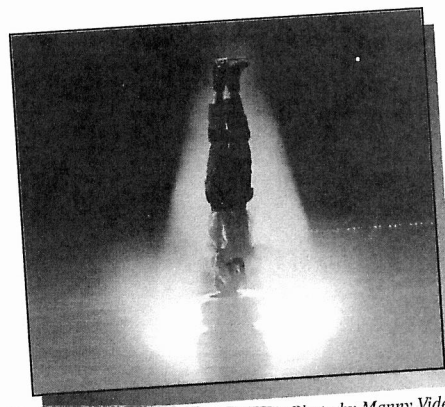
Special Thanks to the Olympic Regional Development Authority, Lake Placid Center for the Arts, Karen Courtland Kelly, and Dennis Allen for all of their help during our second artistic residency in Lake Placid. The company developed new work, taught master classes both on and off the ice and gave performances for the community during its three week residency. This residency was made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency.

Another special thanks to co-ensemble directors Judy Blumberg and Doug Webster for all of their hard work helping to train the ensemble and translate for the invited dance choreographers!

Sincerely,
Moir North
Founder/Director

What's So Great About Gary Beacom Anyway?

An introduction by Dan Gesmer



Gary Beacom in "I'm Your Man". Photo by Manny Vider

Gary Beacom was the first guest artist presented under the Ice Theatre umbrella. Rightly called skating's first true modernist, he embodies Ice Theatre's artistic, experimental madate as few others have. Beacom's amateur career culminated in a controversial but captivating appearance at the 1984 Olympics. Ever the eccentric, renegade rebel, the Canada native has completely liberated his technique from balletic conventions of posture and body line, which the figure skating world has always embraced without question.

Beacom makes frequent use of a thoroughly anti-classical posture: relaxed, rubbery, slouched, bent-over, or crouched. He often uses gravity in much the same way as a modern dancer does, allowing his body to begin free-falling, then quickly catching himself and swinging to carry his earthbound momentum into an unexpected but fluid direction.

Beacom's technique hinges on the exploration of low-slung weighted movements, which also set early modern dance apart from the classical tradition. He jumps out of and into unusual positions, gathering energy to take off in completely original ways. More often than not he is surprisingly off balance.

With this approach, Beacom became the first person to create a substantial body of new techniques of real skating (propulsive stroking, leaning, spinning, and jumping) to achieve modern and novel expression.

Now nearing the end of a 20-month prison sentence for his principled refusal to comply with U.S. income tax law, we hope that Gary's first post-prison performance will be with Ice Theatre. The following article was composed from the confines of the Low Security Correctional Institution in White Deer, PA.

About Creativity

by Gary Beacom

A defining aspect of ice skating as an athletic endeavor is the element of creativity, which, together with musicality and aesthetics, lend the discipline its potential as an art form.

Most sports depend on creativity to some degree. A football team must exhibit not just sound technical fundamentals but also creative play to outsmart opponents. To break a world record, a runner must innovate more advantageous training and performance methods.

What distinguishes creativity in performance art from that in chess, table tennis, or the butterfly stroke? The difference is that creativity without purpose is counterproductive in sports that involve counting, while it is subject to being rewarded in sports like ice skating that involve human judgment.

Let us ask ourselves, then, what part creativity ought to play in skating performance pieces, where creativity is an end in itself.

Ice skating is a multifaceted medium requiring strength, stamina, flexibility, rhythm, musicality, theatrics, passion and aesthetics. Therefore, creativity in ice skating can refer to individual moves, concept, rehearsal method, etc.

It is through systematic rehearsal that the instrument of communication, namely the body, is forged. A sound training regimen methodically nurtures strength, flexibility, balance, and technical skills at a tempo that maximizes progress and minimizes injuries. Without rehearsal, the creative impulse will be frustrated by undeveloped technique.

It is also through rehearsal that the vocabulary of a particular skater or company develops. Aren't all innovations merely composites of simple ideas? Thus, calculating all possible combinations of basic exercises amounts to creativity even though it may be mere accounting. The bewildered will see genius in advanced creativity while the creator will scratch his head and wonder why the idea wasn't discovered long ago. Creativity is perhaps the fine art of concealing the source of one's ideas.

A skating piece should not be a totally random sequence of events, even though a balance of randomness or seeming irrationality is desirable in art (in sharp contrast to the realm of science). Generally a piece is unified by a conceptual underpinning. If we were to compare individual moves to tactics we would compare concept to strategy. Tactics and strategy, though, ordinarily imply a goal as in baseball or warfare, while in the dance arts individual moves and concept are goals in themselves.

Art is special insofar as its purpose has an element of immediacy. A football team scores a touchdown to add points to the total at the end of the game. A performance artist executes particular moves to contribute to an overall concept or mood but also to continuously demonstrate pure invention and adeptness.

It is a curious observation that proficiency and creativity form a sort of dichotomy. A truly masterful performer with solid technique and abundant energy needs no creativity whatsoever to captivate spectators. In fact, often creativ-

ity amounts to a corruption of classical forms. Modern dance vernacular, for example, emphasizes creativity at the expense of the more upright posture and finer balance of classical ballet. Of course, creativity is not "corrupting" if it is only applied to the sequence of classical elements.

It is possibly unfair to label modern dance inferior to ballet, though. The former tends to be more intellectual and choreographer-oriented while the latter tends to be more physical and performer-oriented. George Balanchine's comment, "Someday I'll be known more for my teaching than for my choreography," lends credence to this notion.

It remains to consider creativity as an active vs. a passive process. It is certainly both, in that one can schedule time to invent new maneuvers, or one can build a repertoire by simply taking an open mind and allowing circumstances to suggest novelty. The active process focuses on synthesizing new moves from mating old ideas. The passive allows an abandoning of tradition, habit, superstitions and inveteracy to welcome rudimentary insight. Improvisation is an extreme form of passivity where the mind is cleared of all preconceptions and plans and is guided by circumstances and disposition.

I might, for instance, actively combine a spiral and a spin to generate a camel. On the other hand, I might question the practice of always landing jumps backward and instead land on a forward outside edge, maybe even because of my alacrity to skate despite an injured "landing foot." This is a passive mode in the sense that "necessity is the mother of invention."

Active choreography is more subject to purposelessness, pretentiousness, and buffoonery. To combine pulling my arms repeatedly in (as in a jump combination) with simple stroking, all the while wearing a maroon bow tie, may never have been done before, but it is fatuous and absurd and can only be carried off as parody. Effortless novelty lacking in athletic or aesthetic merit, such as superfluous arm movements, is also often more of a distraction than an asset. Of course, arm movements by a plurality of skaters that are either synchronized or musically coordinated require rehearsal and can thus be entertaining.

Will the greatest ice skater be a specialist? Obviously other pursuits or pastimes take time and energy away from training, but it is through a plenitude of experiences that we build character, enrich our understanding of physical and mental phenomena and develop a repository of ideas and experiences to fuel the creative, expressive process. Indeed it has been said that art reveals worldly and spiritual truth in a way that science cannot.

Creativity must not be defined dogmatically. Dogma is its very antithesis. Though I have ventured to map out the landscape of creativity, surely new perspectives on creativity can be endlessly invented.

Company Activities

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

For the second year in a row, Ice Theatre was at the forefront of arts outreach and education. In an after-school program funded by the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, in cooperation with Riverbank State Park in Harlem, over 90 bilingual New York City public school students from IS 195 received free instruction in ice skating basics, ice dancing, off-ice dance, and music. After 10 weeks in January, February, and March, they presented a special final performance for parents, friends, fellow students and representatives from Sports and Arts. The final ice and dance concerts were held in Riverbank State Park's fabulous rink and theater facilities. The Riverbank/IS 195 project was coordinated and directed by Cam Millar, who put together a wonderful staff of teachers from Ice Theatre.

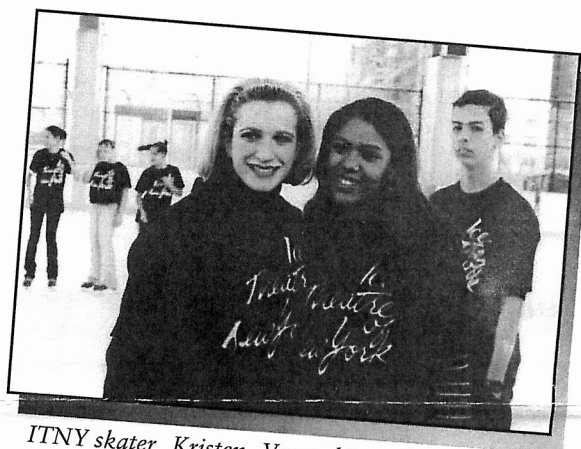
IS 195 teachers, parents and Sports and Arts representatives were all very impressed with the professional level and organization of the program and they expressed their delight in witnessing the focus, interest and enthusiastic participation of the students.

The IS 195 teachers were especially grateful and appreciative of Ice Theatre's teachers, as these children do not otherwise receive any arts and music classes at their school. We believe in programs such as this because it gives us the opportunity to expose a new generation and future audience to the art of ice skating. In our own small way we are contributing and filling a much needed gap in the educational lives of some of New York City's public school students.

We give special thanks to the following Riverbank State Park officials for their continuing generous support: Wayne Martin, Ice Rink Facility Manager; Darcel Michel, Ice Rink Manager; Norma Torres, Complex Manager for the Cultural Arts; Uriel Charles, Cultural Arts Staff; Oscar Smith, Deputy Park Director, and Linda Wood-Guy, Park Director at Riverbank. And from the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, thank you to Jim O'Neill, Executive Director; Brigid Sheehan, Development Director; Robert Dryfoos, Public Affairs Counsel; and Derek Pinnock, Senior Program Officer. To Maria Cabrera

"We're extremely pleased! The students were all focused and concentrated... their final show was very professional. Great!"

— Derek Pinnock, Senior Program Officer
Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation



ITNY skater Kristen Vanorski with enthusiastic IS 195 students at Riverbank State Park.

from IS 195 and all the administration in School District 5, we thank you on behalf of the students.

At Sky Rink at Chelsea Piers, one of New York's premiere sports and arts facilities, Ice Theatre taught 10 weeks of ice skating and off-ice dance classes for 25 primarily Chinese-speaking students from IS 70 in the nearby School District 2 and Chelsea area. Britt Nhi Sarah and Tian Yi Zhang were our teachers for this continuing community out-reach success. In February, Ice Theatre taught the ice skating portion of the Chase Sports & Arts in Schools Festival during which nearly 700 children were immersed in sports and arts activities during their mid-winter break. This program provides an opportunity for a variety of children from all over the city to experience ice skating, gymnastics, soccer, bowling, as well as other activities to which they normally do not have access. Special thanks to the New York City Police Department's Housing Bureau division under the direction of Chief

Dunne for their supervision, support and all-around help in making the festival a success. Also, hats off to Rod Giddens, the Chase Festival Coordinator at the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation.



ITNY teachers for Sports and Arts in School Foundation/IS 195 program: (L to R) Kezia Norton-Salvador, Paul Chernosky, Kristen Vanorski, Britt Nhi Sarah, Cindy Baranowski, Emmanuel Olega and Cam Miller.

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Company Progressives

Our ITNY Dance Connections!

We're very proud of some of our associates' accomplishments within the world of modern dance. In March, ITNY General Manager **Kitty Clark** produced a show featuring her own ensemble and solo dance choreography in Shepherdstown, WV. In April, she was invited to Smith College where she received an MFA, to perform in her duet "Through a Telescope: Seeking Diana." **Heather Harrington**, Sky Rink and Ice Theatre teacher and skater, had her new solo entitled "Locked Doors" accepted into Dance Theatre Workshop's prestigious "Fresh Tracks" series in April. "Fresh Tracks" features up-and-coming contemporary choreographers, and it is quite an accomplishment to be showcased at this venue. Congratulations!

Choreographer **JoAnna Mendl Shaw** spent several weeks in April teaching for the Swiss Gymnastics Federation. In May, in addition to having her new piece "Heart" premiered at our Home Show series, JoAnna will be at Mt. Holyoke College producing and videotaping "Body on Body," a site-specific work she choreographed for combined dancers and equestrian riders. Jo's always pushing the boundaries of art and movement!

Cam Millar, ITNY composer, teacher and production coordinator, has kept himself busy with the above choreographers. Cam performed trombone at Kitty's WV concert, and they are presently collaborating on a new multi-media work. Cam composed the music and sound score for Heather's "Locked Doors," and the two are collaborating on a new large-scale piece. Cam also composed the score for JoAnna's "Body on Body" dancer/equestrian piece at Mt.

Volunteer Spotlight – RUBY ANDRADE

From our inception, we've had the pleasure of having many dedicated volunteers helping us with various tasks and duties. Ruby and her sister Priscilla are joys to have around the office. Here's what Ruby recently said about volunteering at Ice Theatre:

"I volunteer for Ice Theatre because after spending most of my adult life as a professional show skater with "Ice Capades," "Holiday on Ice" and too many other shows to mention I still love being part of "the ice world." I was fortunate to meet Moira before her dream of Ice Theatre became a reality and we have remained friends. I have followed its wonderful growth and now that I have some spare time I feel a duty and a privilege to be able to help in my small way.

Holyoke College. As a result of that work, Cam has been commissioned by Becky Schurink, Mt. Holyoke equestrian coach, to compose music for her Prix St. George equestrian program.

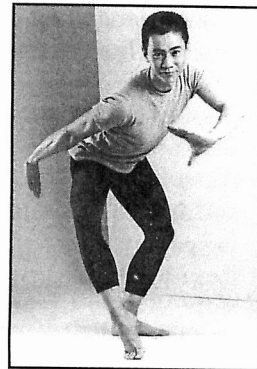
In addition to his busy skating schedule, **David Liu** has also been keeping up with his dancing. He performed with H.T. Chen and Company at the Joyce Theater this past winter and will be performing his own work at Pace University on May 28th, 29th & 30th.

In Other News:

Former ITNY performer, **Julia Speiser**, and husband **Mark Adelman** have just had a baby boy, Jack. CONGRATULATIONS! They are currently living in Beverly Hills, CA.

Another former ITNY performer **Karen Alstadt** is graduating this spring from Smith College with a BA in Biological Sciences. She's pursuing her dream of becoming a veterinarian.

This winter, ITNY performer **Tian Yi Zhang** and ITNY performance club skater, **Raye Levine** were featured models for Capezio's new line of figure skating clothing. **Robin Wagner**, one of the early performers in Ice Theatre, is now the coach of up and coming US skating competitor Sarah Hughes. Sarah recently finished in 8th place at the Worlds in Helsinki, and placed 4th in the Nationals earlier this winter. Congratulations to both Sarah and Robin!



My sister, Priscilla, a retired Wall Street bank executive, also helps as she had always followed my skating career and had met Moira when I did.

There is no better place for skaters of all ages to learn, be encouraged and show their talents than with Ice Theatre.

The "get togethers" for various functions are always fun and a great way to keep in touch with skating friends and to hear all the latest "ice gossip".

May Ice Theatre live prosperously forever. Thank you Moira!"