

*Ice
Theatre
of
New York,
inc.*

The Cutting Edge

A Publication of the Ice Theatre of New York, Inc.

Volume 4 Number 2

Spring 1993

1993 Rockefeller Rink Performance Series

Featured Guests:

Annenko/Srtenski ❖ Nathan Birch ❖ Toller Cranston ❖ Rory Flack ❖ Cathy Foulkes ❖ Beci Safai

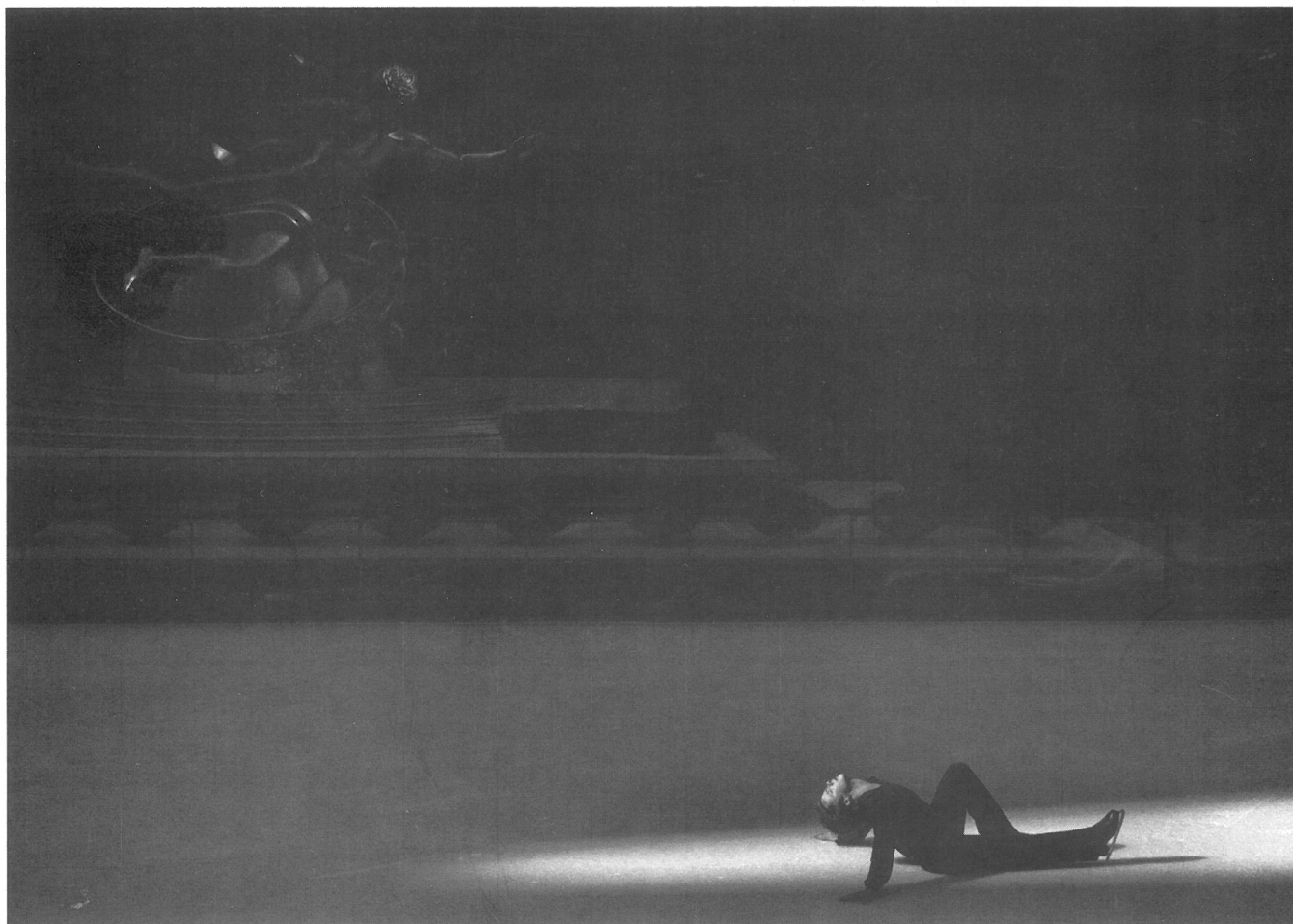


photo: Roy Blakey

Nathan Birch performs "Breezeway" with the Ice Theatre of New York as part of the 1993 Rockefeller Center concert series. Nathan, of *The Next Ice Age*, was recently awarded a choreographer's fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts. This year, the series was expanded to include two concerts showcasing the Ice Theatre Apprentice program.

1992-93 EVENTS

OCTOBER 1992

- 10 Ice Time '92 (An Evening of Artistic Skating, hosted by Dick Button; produced by Matt Herson of Greater Expectations - Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
- 12 Ice Theatre group classes for The New School begin. Every Monday and Tuesday at 7:30 P.M.
- 28 Annual Halloween Skating Benefit party The American Festival Cafe and The Rink at Rockefeller Plaza, New York City.
- 29-30 1992 Home Base Performances at Sky Rink New York, NY

NOVEMBER 1992

- 11-14 Esther Honens International Piano Competition sponsors Ice Theatre performance and classes by Moira North and Toller Cranston. Calgary, Alberta, Canada

DECEMBER 1992

- 4 Fox TV's *Good Day New York* covers Ice Theatre's Apprentice program at Sky Rink
- 7 Lar Lubovitch Dance Company holds skating party at Sky Rink - Ice Theatre performs with special guests
- 31 Grand Central Partnership First Night performances Sky Rink (three performances)

JANUARY 1993

- Professional Performing Arts School - ongoing program in cooperation with Sky Rink and the Martha Graham Company
- 1 Company rehearsals resume Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:15 to 1:15 P.M., Sky Rink (open to the public)
- 18 Plie Power Workshops, Peoria, Illinois- Rob McBrien
- 20 Ice Theatre Performance The Rink At Rockefeller Plaza, New York

FEBRUARY 1993

- 8,10 New School classes commence, Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:30 PM, Sky Rink
- 12 Ice Theatre Artistic Audit for Canada Council of the Canada Ice Dance Company- Moira North
- 24 Ice Theatre Performance The Rink At Rockefeller Plaza, New York

MARCH 1993

- 8, 23 Ice Theatre Apprentice Performance The Rink at Rockefeller Plaza, New York
- 31 Ice Theatre Performance The Rink At Rockefeller Plaza, New York

APRIL 1993

- 14 Dan Froot Experimental Music Workshop with the Ice Theatre Ensemble

MAY 1993

- 2 Hickory Hill Dance Weekend Plie Power Workshop - Rob McBrien

JUNE 1993

- TBA Ice Theatre Performance at Sky Rink (call 212-239-4320 for further information)
- 21 Summer School program at Sky Rink commences (through August 27)

Message from the Artistic Director

During the past three years we have been privileged to present and work with wonderful skaters from the former Soviet Union: Vladimir and Elena Bogoliubov. Irina Skobeleva, Marina Kulbitskaya and Alexandre Esman, Maia Usova and Alexander Zhulin, and our engaging "Resident Daredevils", Ararat Zakarian and Akop Manoukian. The reorganization and resulting instability in Russian society brings these skaters to the United States hoping to earn a living on ice. Of course, as Americans we understand that any immigrant undertakes a true-life adventure, but to actually witness the courage and passionate commitment of the Russians has been an inspiration to us all.

Any change has both positive and negative aspects, and for myself, seeing these skaters, I experience both joy and apprehension. The Soviet system produced some of the finest figure skating of modern times. The training methods and cross-fertilization with Ballet and Gymnastic disciplines created skaters of unparalleled strength and finesse. The work of Natalia Dubova, Tatiana Tarasova, Tamara Moskvina, and others represent, to my mind, the highest evolution of skating to date. These coaches seem to have penetrated the complex interrelationship between concept, choreography, and technical discipline, and watching the results of their work I experience pure joy. I marvel at their mastery.

The apprehension I feel is that the system that produced this excellence will be hard put to continue in the states of the former Soviet Union, owing to the restructuring of governmental priorities. I am afraid that here in the United States the skaters and coaches may experience obstacles to recreating the atmosphere they knew in the past. We must do all that we can to help them find a way to duplicate the aspects of a situation that created so much beauty. They must be given access to all they need.

There is no doubt that these skaters and coaches will contribute significantly to the future of the sport here. What they give us right now is inspiration. I am in awe of their technical and artistic excellence, moved by their commitment to their work, and blown away by their personal courage and idealism. I want to thank them for all that they give us with their presence here. We wish them the very best of everything and give them a warm welcome to the United States and to the Ice Theatre of New York.

Company Activities

Ice Theatre of New York wishes to thank the following Halloween Benefit program advertisers:

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...and special thanks to Lloyd Morgan for the donation of a framed photograph of Erick Hawkins by Barbara Morgan, which was presented to our Honoree, Dick Button



(Seated, left to right): Alexander Esman, Moira North, Maia Usova, Alexander Zhulin. (Standing, rear): Stephen Sterling, Elizabeth Weber, Toller Cranston, R. Palmer Baker, Jr., Melanie Kerr, Barney McHenry, Gary Beacom, Marina Kulbitskaya.

Performances at Ice Theatre's October 28, 1992 Rockefeller Center Halloween Skating Benefit gala and at Sky Rink October 29 and 30, 1992 showcase a wide range of themes and choreography, demonstrating the company's growing prominence in professional artistic skating performance.

(seated, l. to r.) Ken Moir, Moira North, Rob McBrien, Akop Manoukian. (standing, l. to r.) Arie Zakarian, Laurie Welch, Gary Beacom, Robin Wagner, James Schilling, Alexander Esman, Maia Usova, Marina Kulbitskaya, Alexander Zhulin, Amy Grossman, Karen Alstadt, Toller Cranston.



(l. to r.) Mr. & Mrs. Scott Ethan Allen, Dick Button, Aja Zanova Steindler



Moira North and Evie Thomas, daughter of Ice Theatre Board member Claudia Thomas.



(l. to r.) Jirina Ribbens, James Baxter, Moira North, Artemis Egloff, Caroline Moore.

Photos this page: Roy Blakey

1992 Halloween Benefit Patrons

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Company Activities

Ice Time '92

On October 10, 1992, Ice Theatre was proud to perform at Ice Time '92, an evening of artistic skating hosted by Dick Button, to benefit Hospicare, a hospice foundation in New York State. For all Ice Theatre's artistic contributions to the evening, the show was stolen by the Cornell University Hockey Team, whose virtuosic interpretation of Swan Lake set a new standard for daring unpredictability in skating performance. Here, Moira North talks with Matt Herson of Greater Expectations, who produced the benefit and masterminded the unexpected transformation of hockey players into skating artists.

Q: How did you get the idea to choreograph a ballet for the Cornell Hockey Team?

A: In 1985 I was on the board for the local hospice in Ithaca, New York and they were looking for one big fundraiser which would eliminate the need for doing monthly car washes, bake sales, etc. Since I had been involved in figure skating most of my life, an ice show seemed like it would be a fun solution to their problem. Our first idea was to ask local amateurs to skate, but since they do a club show each season we knew this would not be a real draw. It then occurred to me that the Cornell Hockey Team, an NCAA Championship winner, packed the rink for every game and that we should find some interesting way to involve them. About the same time, I happened to see the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo in New York City, and thought: "That's it!"

Q: How did you persuade this rather macho team to do this...in tutus, no less?

A: Timing is everything! And as luck would have it, the coach of the team was looking for some way to thank the Ithaca community for all its support over the years, and the local hospice was known for doing important and caring work for people with a terminal illness. However, it was up to me to talk the team into participating. I went into the locker room expecting to get maybe twelve players to agree, and walked out with the entire Varsity and Junior Varsity teams — 36 players! I might agree that it wasn't just my gift of persuasion, but I also distributed publicity of JoJo Starbuck, who had agreed to skate in the show. We made a deal that after the first rehearsal any player could drop out, and I had the right to cut a player if I didn't think he could do it. Happily, no one dropped out and no one was cut.

Q: What was the best part about working with both the

1985 and 1992 teams?

A: Since we only had three rehearsal times and a total of four hours on the ice for 22 minutes of show, the amount of focus and concentration on getting the job done was terrific. Also, unlike most figure skaters, these skaters are used to working as a team or group.

Most of the Cornell players are from Canada, with a few from Europe. It was interesting to find out that many of them had begun skating as figure skaters, and were quite familiar with waltz jumps, three turns, and the like. Apparently, unlike their American counterparts, their parents started them on figure skates to first learn how to skate. The stick and puck handling came later.

I also never heard standard figure skating lines such as "I don't jump that way", "That move doesn't look good on me", "The ice is too hard", or "I hate my costume and I won't skate in it!"

Q: The truth now, how was it working with Ice Theatre?

A: It was a wonderful experience, especially for the Ithaca audience who had never seen this high level of group figure skating or a group skating piece that was not choreographed to a Broadway show cast album. For me, as producer, it was especially good to work with a professional company and office (Moira [North], Rob [McBrien], and Mark [Hunt]), who were organized, demanding, but reasonable and fun to work with.

It was interesting to watch the class sessions, which are similar to dance company classes. I cannot imagine why it has taken us figure skaters so long to work this way. I hope it will begin to catch on quickly in other areas of the country as well.

Q: What ideas do you have for us?

A: That is a hard one, as I think you are already moving in the right direction.

It would be fun to play with the idea of choreographing a piece with both the Ice Theatre and a professional hockey team. I think it could be fun, quite powerful, and also debunk many of the common myths regarding figure skaters and hockey players. I would also like to work on a piece which emphasized the speed, power and edges of figure skating.



Members of the Ice Theatre of New York ensemble with the Cornell University Hockey Team.

Emphasis on Education

The summer of 1992 brought to fruition the most comprehensive educational program in Ice Theatre's history. Ice Theatre's instructors brought our commitment to the relationship between skating and dance to rinks across the U.S. Here, some of our young New York City participants relate their own experiences with Ice Theatre as part of the Sky Rink Summer Session.

This year's program at Sky Rink from June 21 to August 27 will include beginner-level workshops every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 - 1:30 P.M. Current members of the apprentice program rehearse with the Ice Theatre ensemble following these workshops. Come and watch our work in progress.

Ice Theatre has helped me in many ways. It helped me and the other people understand the meanings of expression, posture and different movements. We work on bound flow which helps to create a sense of tension in movements and which helps portray a certain feeling. We also work with all types of music and motifs such as animals, ethnicities, and feelings like happy, sad, and switch-offs between the two. Once we had to bring in two different motifs and skate to them. One of the ones I brought in was a Tango. We all did it and Moira North told us that a Tango is made up of sharp and precise movements. We also did movements to an African song. She told us that we have to use our backs which was unnatural for us. We had to use our whole bodies. My first motif in class was the blues. We had to go from high to low postures.

Alizah Allen

I think Ice Theatre achieved making the other members and me more aware of our bodies and we know more about how to use them properly.

I had a great time this summer at Ice Theatre and a great time overall in the summer classes. It was sort of hard keeping up with the rest of the adults, but otherwise I had a great time.

Joey Rigol

I liked all the steps Mr. McBrien had for us. Sometimes I would use them in my warm-ups. It was also interesting to see how everyone twisted the step (sometimes). At first I didn't know what steps went with what kind of music, but experiencing Ice Theatre during the summer gave me an outlook to the right steps with the right actions with the right music. Then I could synchronize (later, while practicing) it into one piece and it would turn out great. I'm looking forward to coming back next year.

Working with Ice Theatre this summer has been a great help to my skating. I am doing the exercises with Rob McBrien. I have learned to keep my head up at all times, even if I stumble on a step or two. I have learned to use more "fire" when doing the Ice Theatre exercises and also when I

Rosemary Colletti

am skating freestyle or pairs. When I was doing improvisation with Moira North, I learned how to express different kinds of movements and feeling with different kinds of music — for example, with a

(continued next column)

(from previous column)

blues I would use low movements and I would be very loose; and with a tango my moves would be high, quick, and very sharp. When I am doing improv[isation], I feel I can give it my all without being coy, and just do whatever goes along with the music. Also, with improv I have learned to use moves from Martha Graham and interpret to her music. Another thing I learned with Ice Theatre this summer is if a group of people do different moves interacting with each other, you can make a machine. Personally, I thought that was kind of neat! Well, this summer I have learned many things by working with Ice Theatre, and I hope to learn more creative things from the Ice Theatre of New York in the future!

Lake Placid Report

Throughout the 1992 summer session, Ice Theatre of New York Plie Power/Style classes were led by Ice Theatre performer Cecily Morrow at the Olympic Center in Lake Placid, New York. Two classes were held three days a week for twenty-five minutes each. An average of ten skaters attended each class, sometimes expanding to as many as twenty-five, according to summer session attendees.

Enthusiasm for the classes was high among the parents and coaches of the class participants, who before long started coming to class dressed in typical Ice Theatre garb. At mid-season, a core of twelve skaters was selected out of the classes to skate some of the Plie Power exercises in a Saturday night show during a "work-in-progress" choreographed by Morrow. Skaters of all levels, preliminary through gold test, took to the ice dressed all in black and performed a five-minute piece to Ennis Morricone's "The Mission"

Hosting the classes was a new experiment for the Lake Placid summer session. The idea belonged to Colleen Duffy, Director of Figure Skating at the Olympic Regional Development Authority, the organization which maintains and operates all of the 1980 Olympic venues. The decision to lead the classes was a last-minute one for Morrow, who had planned to be in Lake Placid all summer finishing the first in a series of four videos, *Systematic Figure Skating: The Spin and Jump Techniques of Gustave Lussi*, documenting Gus Lussi's teaching methodology for use in instruction. This video series, hosted by Dick Button, is an in-depth look at Mr. Lussi's techniques, featuring 1992 Olympic Silver Medalist Paul Wylie and other skaters being instructed by Gus Lussi himself, as well as film footage of Tenley Albright, Dick Button, John Curry, Dorothy Hamill, Don Jackson, Otto and Maria Jelinek, Gordie McKellen, and Ronnie Robertson.

The first hour (Volume One), offers step-by-step instructions from Mr. Lussi on sit spins, back and forward scratch spins, and steps in and out of spins. It is now available for purchase. Write to Cecily Morrow for more information, or order Volume One by sending your check or money order for \$53.00 (including shipping and handling) to:

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Please indicate if you are a pro, skater, parent, or represent a rink or club. Please allow three weeks for delivery.

North by Northwest: Director's Report

On this page Frank Nowosad pursues the theme put forward on page 2 by Rob McBrien, of paying tribute to generations of excellence on the part of the skaters of the former Soviet Union, as they leave their homeland(s) for the opportunities afforded them as professionals in the United States. We are reminded once again of the pivotal role of the Soviet system in bringing the relationship between skating and dance to the forefront of skating competition and performance.

The article by Edwin Denby first appeared in 1949, but is still a cogent analysis of how skating indeed requires dance and theatre elements in order to maximize its potential and ability to move the audience's emotions.

- Moira North

A Tribute to the Soviets

- Frank Nowosad

(This article first appeared in *Thin Ice*. Reprinted by permission)

Every day the newspapers tell of the progressive disintegration of the Soviet Union. Yet at the recent Junior World Championships in Hull, Quebec, skaters from that country claimed two out of the three top medals in the pairs, dance and men's events. At the forthcoming Olympics in Albertville and the summer games in Barcelona, a group of athletes will represent a country that by then will have become a phantom.

Like so many sports, figure skating has been profoundly influenced by the Soviets. A glance at the record books seems to indicate that they began to exert force during the early 1960's, but on closer inspection, one sees that the Russians played an important part in the early international competitions at the end of the 19th century. Although the winner of the first World Championships held in 1890 — albeit still without the benefit of an international skating organization — was the Canadian Louis Rubenstein, it is instructive to note that the competition was held in St. Petersburg. Perhaps the greatest early Russian skater was Nikolai Panin; he was second to Ulrich Salchow in the 1903 World Championships but he is probably better remembered as one of the foremost practitioners of the intricate "special figures."

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and two world wars seemed to obliterate skating in that reach of the world, but when Ludmilla Belousova and Oleg Protopopov appeared on the international scene in the early 1960's, they hit like a two-person velvet revolution. (Oleg Protopopov's first teacher was Nikolai Panin.)

Then in dance, in the late 1960's, came Ludmilla Pakhamova and Alexander Gorshkov, to be followed by a roster of dance innovators. Pair and dance have been dominated by the Soviets and although they have curiously never

been effective in the women's event, they have produced many men skaters of note.

In the pairs, particularly, champions poured forth until in 1988, we witnessed the epitome of refinement in the performances of Katarina Gordeeva and Sergei Grinkov.

The demise of East Germany does not seem to have altered the course of world figure skating but with the imminent end of the Soviet Union the future of figure skating appears threatened. No country has been able to maintain the same consistent standard of performance. What we once thought of as "domination" only turns out to be "achievement."

Skating as a Form of Ballet

- Edwin Denby

(from *Looking at the Dance*, Horizon Press, N.Y. (c) 1949)

Watching Sonja Henie's new ice revue from the point of view of ballet, as I naturally did, I found Freddie Trenkler's superb comic skating far more interesting than Miss Henie's celebrated sweet kind. And I imagine if skating is to become a form of real ballet, ice ballet is more likely to develop from the comic style than from the graceful one. For it is the comics who use most inventively and most dramatically the peculiar resources of motion on the ice. In the middle of a mad rush they stand quiet. They caper, spin, stop, rush off, fall and scoot headlong. They leap correctly and oddly, they skate clumsily and delicately and you see the point of the difference. They set the smallest movements against the biggest ones; they change the accent of a step, they change their direction, their skating impetus for the precise value the change has, and they don't let the change break the continuity of their number. It is out of the extremes of rhythm that skating alone can have that they build their dramatic effects.

And their dramatic intention, even more than their technical range, is what makes the comedians the real models for a serious ice dancer. Like serious dancers in the theater, the ice comedians don't show off their own person,

or even their own proficiency; they show you a number, a dance. They focus your attention on a drama of character or on a drama of contrasted movement. In any form of theater dance it is the dramatic focus that makes the difference between "legitimate" and "cheese cake."

Among the non-comic skaters I have seen, there was one who seemed pre-eminently to have this dramatic approach to a part — Skippy Baxter, who is now in the Army. Technically, too, he could be compared to the best comedians. Watching him made me hope a bold choreographer would make a serious group number, utilizing the full technical resources of skating for a legitimate dramatic purpose. Such a piece would lift the audience out of their seats by the incredible stupidity, the sweep and shock of its movement.

Miss Henie's special style, as far as I can see, does not tend in this direction. Admirable is the bland surfacing she gives her routines; she blends her steps, she joins the longer phrases, and she delivers the routine as a coherent whole to perfection.

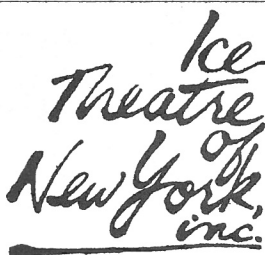
But both from the point of view of contrasted movement and from the point of view of dramatic interest her skating does not suggest anything like real ballet. In movement she avoids wherever possible extremes of force and tautness, she stays in the middle of the dynamic range where everything is nice and charming. It is Hollywood's device of crooning-in-movement. Taken out of the tiny camera-field and viewed on a large stage, you see it is just a salon style of motion.

Even if it isn't ballet, there is nothing wrong with a salon style if it has objective dramatic interest — as for example the impeccable dancing of Astaire has. When he dances, he is showing you a dance, he gives it a dramatic focus. But Miss Henie seems not to be showing a dance, she seems to be exhibiting her proficiency and her own cute person. Her amazingly powerful personality rivets one's attention firmly on her personal attractions. I looked at them attentively for four numbers. Very nice, but no drama.

Note: We at Ice Theatre would like to know what you think.

Edward J. Ross In Memoriam

Ice Theatre of New York notes with sadness the passing of Edward J. Ross on January 22, 1993. Ed served as the first Chairman of Ice Theatre's Board of Directors from 1984 until 1988. His insight and efforts were crucial to our early development and success. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family.



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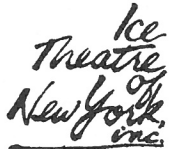
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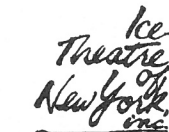
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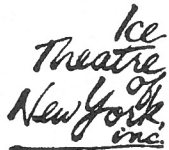
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