

# HOME SEASON



*Ice  
Theatre  
New York*®

**CELEBRATING THE JOY  
OF DANCING ON ICE**

**MAY 3, 4 & 6, 2024**

SKY RINK AT CHELSEA PIERS

**BENEFIT GALA • MAY 6**

HONORING

**MERYL DAVIS & CHARLIE WHITE AND  
TANITH BELBIN WHITE & BEN AGOSTO**

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[icetheatre.org](http://icetheatre.org)    

***ON STAGE OR ON ICE  
WE HAVE YOU COVERED***



MDP PROGRAMS

## ABOUT THE COMPANY

Ice Theatre of New York® (ITNY) creates and advances dance on ice as an ensemble performing art and provides education and public performances to people of all ages. Founded by Moira North in 1984, ITNY created the first not-for-profit professional ice dance company in the United States and was the first to receive funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

ITNY achieves its public arts and education mission by:

- Commissioning and performing new pieces created by recognized and emerging dance and ice skating choreographers. The company has created exclusive works by choreographers as varied as well-known skating choreographers Elisa Angeli, Lorna Brown, and Joel Dear, modern dance choreographers Jacquelyn Buglisi, Elisa Monte, David Parsons, and Jody Sperling, performance artist Ann Carlson, McKnight Choreographer Fellow Deneane Richburg, and ballet great Edward Villella. We just completed our first commissioned work for the Tree Lighting at Bank of America Winter Village in Bryant Park choreographed by Broadway Dancer Kolton Krouse.
- Making performances accessible to diverse audiences and presenting dozens of free performances, featuring our current repertory throughout New York City.
- Offering arts education programs on ice dancing and figure skating for school-aged children in Brooklyn, Queens, Harlem, and Central Park, annually serving 1,000 NYC school students.
- Training company skaters and guest skating artists in our seasonal Master Edge Classes at Chelsea Piers Sky Rink and Bryant Park, as well as offering training programs for aspiring ice dance artists, including our Junior Ensemble.
- Collaborating with choreographers, producers, presenters, administrators, and advocates from the dance and skating worlds and beyond while exploring creatively exciting relationships with artists from theatre, music, and new media disciplines.



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Moira North

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Jirina Ribbens

### **Outreach Director**

Sarah France

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Mazal Karlick

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## THE CAST



Danil Berdnikov



Collin Brubaker



Sarah France



Theron "TJ" James



Joe Johnson



Karina Manta



Libby McGrosky



Kseniya Ponomaryova



Liz Yoshiko Schmidt



Aaron Singletary

## GUEST ARTISTS



Ilya Malinin



Oona & Gage Brown

## PERFORMING APPRENTICES



Georgina Blackwell



Caroline Mura



Milly Wasserman



## **HOME SEASON PERFORMANCES**

MAY 3, 4 & 6, 2024

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## **BENEFIT GALA & PERFORMANCE**

MAY 6, 2024

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### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Jirina Ribbens

### **OUTREACH DIRECTOR**

Sarah France

### **PROGRAM ASSOCIATE**

Mazal Karlick

### **LIGHTING & PRODUCTION DIRECTOR**

Chris Lipari

### **ICE THEATRE OF NEW YORK®**

Danil Berdnikov, Collin Brubaker, Sarah France,  
Theron "TJ" James, Joe Johnson, Karina Manta, Libby McGrosky,  
Kseniya Ponomaryova, Liz Yoshiko Schmidt, and Aaron Singletary

### **GUEST PERFORMERS (MAY 6 ONLY)**

Ilia Malinin

Oona & Gage Brown

### **PERFORMING APPRENTICES**

Georgina Blackwell, Caroline Mura, and Milly Wasserman



# 2024 HOME SEASON

(Program subject to change)

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## PRE SHOW: IN FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

Choreographed and Performed by Sarah France & Libby McGrosky

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## NEUROCIRCLE

Choreographed and Performed by Sarah France

Music: "Between Worlds" by Anna Phoebe and Jake Downs

In brain development, the neural pathways created inform how we move through and interact with the world and find us both in communication or connection with each other and in silence or distance from others. Existing in spaces between worlds of the personal and performative, we become who we are — working in circles of life, mind, figures, and apparatus.

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## ROOT TO RISE

Choreographed by Milly Wasserman

Performed by Georgie Blackwell, Caroline Mura, and Milly Wasserman

Costumes by Georgina Blackwell

Music: Selections recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi — The Four Seasons

Root to Rise explores the awakening of three beings, finding their roots, and becoming one.

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## TAKE FIVE

Choreographed by Eliot Halverson

Performed by Danil Berdnikov

Music: Composed by Paul Desmond and played by the David Brubeck Quartet

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## BUTTERFLY PHASE

Choreographed by Benoit Richaud

Performed by Liz Yoshiko Schmidt

Music: Kelly Moran

## **RHYTHM DANCE (MAY 6 ONLY)**

Choreographed by Romain Haguenauer

Performed by Oona & Gage Brown

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## **DRY YOUR TEARS, AFRIKA**

Choreographed and Performed by Theron "TJ" James

Music: From the film Amistad

This is a powerful testament to black history, serving as both an acknowledgment and tribute to the countless black individuals before us who, in the face of profound darkness, embodied resilience, light, and the unwavering desire for freedom. "Dry Your Tears, Afrika" is not just a historical reflection but a joyous homage and celebration of the indomitable black spirit that inspires and uplifts us all.

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## **SACROSANCT**

Choreographed by Lorna Brown

Performed by Kseniya Ponomaryova and Collin Brubaker

Music: "The Poet Acts" by Philip Glass

In Sacrosanct, the ice becomes a sacred sanctuary, a stage upon which the timeless dance of survival unfolds. And as the music swells and fades into the echoing silence, the two figures remain, bound together in an eternal embrace, two trees in the heart of the rainforest, standing tall against the tide of time.

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## **2024 WORLD CHAMPION (MAY 6 ONLY)**

Special Guest Artist

Ilia Malinin

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## **APPALACHIA WALTZ (Re-Staging)**

Choreographed by JoAnna Mendl Shaw and Douglas Webster

Performed by Danil Berdnikov, Sarah France, Joe Johnson,

Karina Manta, Liz Yoshiko Schmidt, and Aaron Singletary

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## **FINALE**

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## WHO'S WHO

**DANIL BERDNIKOV (Performer)** has been with ITNY for three seasons. He hails from the city of Samara, Russia, from which he competed as part of the junior national team, as well as across his vast native land through high school. He then moved to Moscow both to continue his education and to join Stage Entertainment Russia to begin performing as a skater. Performing for an audience allowed Danil to fall in love with skating in a new way and his career blossomed over eight years with Willy Bietak Productions and Wheeler Productions in the United States, Stageworks Worldwide Production in the UK, and Holiday on Ice Productions and Dynamic Shows Entertainment in the EU. Danil is grateful to his parents, coaches, choreographers, and the fellow skaters who have supported him along the way.

**GEORGINA BLACKWELL (Performing Apprentice)** has been skating for 19 years and competes at the Junior Solo Dance level. She is a USFS Gold Medalist and National Solo Dance Final competitor. Georgina is a former member of ITNY's Junior Ensemble and currently skates as a performing apprentice with ITNY, and she looks forward to skating with the company. Outside of skating, Georgina is a student at Columbia University studying Classical language and literature.

**LORNA BROWN (Choreographer)**, a British and World Professional Champion and World and Olympic coach, has been a principal performer in numerous ice shows across the globe, including John Curry's Ice Dancing on Broadway and Theatre of Skating at the London Palladium. She has appeared in TV specials, touring galas, and commercials worldwide and has studied contemporary dance, working with some of the world's leading choreographers. She has coached and choreographed for over 50 national champions including two world professional champions. Lorna most recently choreographed for Emanuel Sandhu (three-time Canadian Champion), Kevin Van Der Perren (Belgium Champion, two-time European medalist, and 2011 silver medalist in Bratislava and Skate America), and Jenna McCorkell (10-time British Champion). Lorna has given workshops on all aspects of figure skating at national and international seminars for both skaters and coaches. She has produced and directed her international skating school in the UK called Skate of the Art with the world-famous Rafael Arutunian. She specializes in the latest physics and aerodynamics in skating techniques, focuses a great deal on expression and style in her choreography, and has written several articles for skating magazines on these subjects. Lorna moved to the USA several years ago, has been awarded the PSA Level 7 ranking, and holds a bachelor's in sports science.

**OONA & GAGE BROWN (Guest Performers — MAY 6 ONLY)** are a sister and brother U.S. ice dance team from Long Island, NY. Oona & Gage started apprenticing with ITNY in 2016. They were crowned the 2022 World Junior Ice Dance Champions in Tallinn, Estonia! Since then, they have made the transition to the senior level and competed for Team USA. Oona and Gage perform regularly with ITNY while training with their coaches, Inese

Bucevica and ITNY choreographer, Joel Dear. Recently, they have been training part-time at the Ice Academy in Montreal.

**COLLIN BRUBAKER (Performer)** hails from Chicago, Illinois, and made his ITNY debut at Rockefeller Center on March 8, 2022. He started skating at the age of six, following in the footsteps of his older siblings. A former team USA member, Collin has a US National Junior Silver Medal under his belt and represented the USA in the ISU Junior World Championships, ISU Grand Prix Skate Canada, and other international competitions. After finishing his competitive career, he completed his degree in Finance & Communications at Eastern Michigan University. He and his partner Kseniya Ponomaryova are the 2021 US Open Professional Championships Skater's Skater Award winners and 2022 US Open Professional Championships Grand Champions.

**SARAH FRANCE (Performer/Choreographer/Outreach Director)** joined ITNY in 2018, bringing her passion for ice dancing and broad knowledge of skating skills, choreographic styles, and skating disciplines to the company. Sarah has translated her skills to many different areas as both the Director of Outreach and within the ITNY Professional Ensemble, in addition to being a choreographer, edge class instructor, aerialist, inline skater, dancer, and off-ice instructor. Her dedication to skating and desire to share her love of the ice with others has made her a sought-after instructor and performer, who firmly believes in the life-transforming nature of skating. She is a six-time US Open Professional Figure Skating Championships competitor, national ice dance competitor, and US Figure Skating triple gold medalist, and is honored to realize her childhood dream of performing as a member of ITNY. In addition to her work with ITNY, Sarah's skills have been highly valued in training developmental through internationally competitive skaters, working as a coach, choreographer, and program director. She is a faculty member for Shattuck-St. Mary's International Figure Skating Center of Excellence training camps, and a welcomed guest coach in skating programs around the world. Her well-rounded education on and off the ice has allowed her to flexibly work in all disciplines of skating, and she loves to share her passion for movement, glide, and artistic expression with others through performing, teaching, and introducing others to the joy of skating.

**ELIOT HALVERSON (Choreographer)**, a native of Minneapolis, started skating at age six. She won the 2007 U.S. Junior Championship, 2006 U.S. Novice Championship, and 2004 U.S. Intermediate Championship. Eliot is a national and international level competitive choreographer and served as choreographer for the Bressanone Summer Skating Camp in the Italian Alps. In addition to "Take Five," she created "Swimming," a piece for three skaters to music by Florence and the Machine, for ITNY in 2016.

**THERON JAMES ("TJ") (Performer)** made his ITNY debut in the 2019 City Skate Concert Series when he skated "Presence," a piece that acknowledges the presence and absence of blackness within the predominately white space of skating in honor of Black History

Month. Following his amateur career as a national-level skater, TJ joined his first touring ice show in 2009 and has been a principal soloist for most major professional companies including Holiday On Ice, Disney On Ice, Royal Caribbean, and many more through the span of his vibrant career. He has also performed for television shows such as Dancing on Ice and Instinct through ITNY with Alan Cumming on CBS. When TJ is not performing, he is a full-time real estate agent and advisor here in NYC with Nestseekers International.

**JOE JOHNSON (Performer)** is a former Team USA ice dancer. With their partner and fellow company member Karina Manta, they competed internationally for four years before retiring to join Cirque du Soleil. During the pandemic, they worked in England on the reality show Dancing on Ice, and after two years abroad, started touring nationally with Ice Dance International. They have since settled in New York City and perform with ITNY in addition to coaching and choreographing full-time. This is Joe's first season performing with ITNY.

**CHRIS LIPARI (Lighting Designer/Production Manager)** is pleased to once again illuminate the creative work of ITNY. He began his professional career as a dancer and figure skater, performing at Radio City Music Hall, and in Las Vegas, Australia, Italy, Portugal, Tokyo, and Saudi Arabia. After finishing a year-long international tour of the roller-skating spectacle Starlight Express, Chris merged his performing talents, business acumen, and innate creativity to launch a career as a special events producer/director. Currently, as a nonprofit event specialist, his focus is on creating and executing experiences for organizations in the health and wellness, social justice, animal welfare, and arts and culture sectors. [chrislipari.com](http://chrislipari.com)

**ILIA MALININ (Guest Performer; MAY 6 ONLY)** At 17, Ilia "Quad God" Malinin was the youngest person named to the 2022 TIME100 NEXT list, after being the first and only skater to ever land a quad axel, the most difficult and elusive jump in figure skating, making him the early favorite for Olympic Gold in Milano Cortina 2026. The innovative and unconventional Ilia became a true game changer in 2022, establishing a World Junior Record for the men's Short Program, Free Skate, and Combined Score, and becoming the youngest ever men's champion at Skate America - while landing a quad axel. At the 2024 U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Columbus, Ohio, Ilia defended his title, winning back-to-back US Championships. Ilia capped off his 2024 season by setting a World Record and winning World Championship Gold at the ISU World Championships in Montreal, Canada. The son of two Olympians, Ilia is a freshman at George Mason, and when he's not training and competing, enjoys skateboarding, playing video games, and watching extreme sports.

**KARINA MANTA (Performer)** is an ice dancer and former international medalist and Grand Prix competitor for Team USA with her partner, Joe Johnson. Since retiring from competitive skating, she has toured with the Cirque du Soleil show AXEL and performed as a professional for the UK television series, Dancing on Ice, which she and her celebrity partner won in the 2021-22 season. She has been a company member of Ice Dance International

since 2021. This is her second season performing with ITNY. In addition to performing, Karina is the author of the young adult memoir, *On Top of Glass* (Knopf 2021) about growing up queer in figure skating.

**LIBBY MCGROSKY (Performer)** has been skating with ITNY since 2023. They began skating at the age of four and continued skating through high school with a focus on freestyle and an interest in synchronized skating. In college, they skated for the Hayden Synchronized Skating Teams at the Junior and Senior levels and represented the USA for three international seasons. After completing their competitive career, Libby joined ITNY and began the process of switching to professional figure skating. Libby obtained a bachelor of science in environmental science with a minor in climate change and sustainability from the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

**CAROLINE MURA (Performing Apprentice)** has been skating for 14 years and competes at the Novice freestyle and Senior Solo Dance level. She is a four-time US Figure Skating gold medalist and sectional qualifying competitor. Additionally, she has won multiple intercollegiate national titles and is a three-time National Solo Dance Final competitor. Outside of skating, Caroline is a senior at New York University studying biology on a pre-med track.

**MOIRA NORTH (Founder/Artistic Director)** has been named one of the 25 Most Influential Names in Figure Skating by International Figure Skating Magazine, as a driving force in the development of figure skating as a performing art. Since founding ITNY in 1984, she has commissioned renowned dance choreographers to make new works for the company while nurturing and developing choreographers from the world of ice. She has also been a catalyst in the development of other artistic ice dance companies in both Canada and the United States. Moira and partner Patrick Dean skated ITNY's first work, a collaboration with Belgian dance choreographer Marc Bogaerts, which won them first place in the Free Dance at the Professional Championships in Jaca, Spain. In her subsequent work as ITNY Director, Moira has continued to integrate contemporary dance into the repertoire of ice choreography. Some of Moira's collaborations include productions with opera singer Alicia Hall Moran, singer/composer Theo Bleckmann, the piece "Of Water and Ice" with Jody Sperling and DJ Spooky, and the project *The Unseen*, a real-time motion capture performance on ice showcasing, celebrating, and honoring Black figure skaters of the past and present, with multidisciplinary artist LaJuné McMillian.

**KSENIYA PONOMARYOVA (Performer)** made her ITNY debut at Rockefeller Center on March 8, 2022. A native of Odesa, Ukraine, she started skating at age five and trained with the Figure Skating Team of Ukraine beginning at age 11. She has won a Ukrainian Novice Championship and ISU Junior Grand Prix and competed internationally for Ukraine, as well as five times at US Nationals, where she was a US Sectional medalist. Kseniya holds a Master Rating in Choreography and a bachelor's degree in sports education. She and her

partner Collin Brubaker are 2021 US Professional Championships Skater's Skater Award winners and 2022 US Open Professional Champions.

**JIRINA RIBBENS (Executive Director)** joined the ITNY staff in December 2004, after serving on the board since the company's founding. Over the past 19 years, Jirina has overseen ITNY's growth, including expanding its outreach programming for public school children, adding ongoing edge classes for ice artists, and entering into new media. Her ITNY collaboration with Improv Everywhere received over four million views on YouTube and her collaboration with multi-disciplinary artist LaJuné McMillian included live motion capture and video manipulation. Before her work with ITNY, Jirina worked in a variety of positions in the entertainment and sports industries, where, at Candid Productions/SFX/Clear Channel, she produced and managed events with two-time Olympic Champion Dick Button. She also worked as an Olympic sports consultant and producer for television networks at nine Olympic Games, winning a 2002 Sports Emmy for Outstanding Live Sports Special as Associate Producer for the Salt Lake City Olympic Winter Games with NBC. Jirina and her husband reside in Harlem. She is looking forward to celebrating 20 years as Executive Director with ITNY in 2025 when the company will celebrate its 40th anniversary.

**BENOIT RICHAUD (Choreographer)** stands as a preeminent figure skating choreographer whose artistry and innovation have left an indelible mark on the world of figure skating. Hailing from the culturally rich enclave of Avignon, France, he embarked on a remarkable journey from ice dancer to choreographic luminary, captivating the hearts and minds of audiences worldwide. With an unwavering commitment to his craft, Benoit has forged a path that continues to reshape the landscape of figure skating. Consistently recognized for his groundbreaking work, Benoit garners annual nominations for Best Choreographer at the ISU Skating Awards. Over the past decade, he has consistently earned acclaim as the most original choreographer in the figure skating world, a testament to his unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of his craft.

**LIZ YOSHIKO SCHMIDT (Performer)** has been skating with ITNY since 2017. Luscious edges, artistic movement, and ice dancing inform her skating and professional career, which began in 2013, at the age of 18, performing internationally in Europe, Egypt, and across the US. She is a Japanese/German American skater who hails from Chicago, IL, and recently moved from San Francisco, CA, to New York City. She is a U.S. Figure Skating double gold medalist in Freestyle and Moves in the Field, and a silver medalist in Ice Dancing. Liz received her bachelor of fine arts in painting from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2018, has an art studio in Brooklyn, and is the creator of the ice fashion line Dansu Wear.

**JOANNA MENDL SHAW (Choreographer)**, a veteran choreographer and dance educator, has been expanding the parameters and strategies for dance-making since

1998. Her company, The Equus Projects, tours throughout the States and Europe, creating site-specific works in immersive collaboration with local communities. An internationally recognized dance educator, JoAnna has taught on faculty at NYU, The Juilliard School, Alvin Ailey, Princeton, Mount Holyoke, and Montclair State. JoAnna is the recipient of NEA Choreographic Fellowships and multiple NEA grants for Interdisciplinary Performance. She has brought her somatic practice of Physical Listening into elementary schools and academic think tanks, the Naval War College, NYU Medical School, and in 2024, as a Visiting Adjunct Professor at the Stanford School of Medicine. JoAnna is a certified Laban Movement Analyst and is the author of Physical Listening, A Dancer's Interspecies Journey.

**AARON SINGLETARY (Performer)** grew up in Pennsylvania skating for the Penguin Figure Skating Club and started his national competitive career training with Craig Maurizi at the Ice House in Hackensack, NJ. Aaron earned gold in Moves in the Field as well as singles Freestyle. Aaron now coaches primarily at City Ice Pavilion in New York City. Over the years, Aaron has had many internationally revered coaches. Each left a prominent mark on his approach to skating and singling out one or two would be a disservice to the others. He aims to further his knowledge so that one day he too may be an internationally recognized performer and coach. The 2019 Home Season marked his debut with ITNY.

**MILLY WASSERMAN (Performing Apprentice)** has been performing with ITNY since 2015. She became a member of ITNY's Junior Ensemble in 2017. Later, Milly made her choreographic debut at the 2022 ITNY Home Season Performances with her piece "In An Instant." She is the 2024 intercollegiate national champion, a four-time national competitor in ice dance, and is the 2023 Intercollegiate Solo Pattern Dance national champion. Milly is a member of the NYU Figure Skating Team, which placed 4th at the 2024 intercollegiate national championships. When Milly is not choreographing or skating, she is at New York University studying psychology.

**DOUGLAS WEBSTER (Choreographer)** is the Executive and Founding Artistic Director of Ice Dance International. Under his direction, the company has produced two PBS specials, two performances at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, multiple national tours, and has created distinctive partnerships in Stowe, VT, and Portsmouth, NH. His extensive career in performance skating has spanned 36 years. Douglas's previous credits include Artistic Director for ITNY, where he choreographed over 30 pieces since co-creating Appalachia Waltz in 1997; Creative Director of Shall We Dance on Ice, a three-year Disson television series that featured Meryl Davis, Charlie White, Tanith Belbin White, and Ben Agosto, and choreographer for Holiday on Ice and Disney on Ice for a decade in a variety of roles. Douglas skated in Carmen on Ice in 1989, choreographed by Sandra Bezic, and is humbled to have been one of Judy Blumberg's skating partners. He toasts all the ITNY awardees tonight for their significant contributions and thanks ITNY for providing a special home to so many lovers of artistic skating.



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Sheer Print Solutions, Printing  
Michele Mintzer, Proofreading  
Jordan Cowan, On Ice Perspectives, Videography  
and all our ITNY Volunteers!



**Council on  
the Arts**



### NYC Cultural Affairs

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