

# LAR LUBOVITCH: *High-Impact*

by EDWARD Z. EPSTEIN

It was a stroke of luck for the skating world when John Curry approached Lar Lubovitch, a man acknowledged as one of the most important contributors to 20th century ballet, and asked if he'd be interested in working in a new medium.

"I was always a fan of figure skating," says Lubovitch, a dynamic, quietly intense person. He points out, "Choreographing for the ice is not that different from dance — it's a different use of timing, as far as the music is concerned; and the ice requires a much broader use of time, it's a changing curve, momentum is maintained on ice." The challenge, however, was basic: to create a lyrical, artistic image and design "that embodies the music."

Working with Curry — who, with his company, was making skating history in the late nineteen-seventies and eighties —

Lubovitch created a number of striking pieces, including "Tilt-a-Whirl," a duet for Curry and Peggy Fleming, also skated by Dorothy Hamill. Did Lubovitch, while working with skaters, skate himself? He smiles and states emphatically: "I wore cleats when I was out there, so I could demonstrate movement. But I never wore skates!"

It's surprising his accomplishments didn't include skating, considering the scope of his creative abilities (which encompassed virtually all mediums, including stage, screen and television; he's even been nominated for a Grammy). Lubovitch was a noted dancer before forming the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, at the age of twenty-five, in 1968 (the Company celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2008). A native of Chicago

(he was named Chicagoan of the Year in 2007 and 2008, in recognition of his contributions to his hometown), he was educated at the University of Iowa and the Juilliard School in New York. Antony Tudor, Jose Limon, Anna Sokolow and Martha Graham were among his teachers.

Lubovitch made his Broadway debut in 1987 — and received a Tony nomination for his efforts — for his musical staging of the Stephen Sondheim/James Lapine *oeuvre*, "Into the Woods." In 1993,



Filming of "The Planets"



he created the breathtaking dance sequences for the Broadway show, "The Red Shoes," for which The Theatre Development Fund presented him with the coveted Astaire Award. The final ballet of that show entered the repertoire of American Ballet Theatre and the National Ballet of Canada.

For the past fifteen years, he's enjoyed an enviably prolific career (if, like

the late skating legend Sonja Henie, Lubovitch chose to have a "Trophy Room" in his home, the shelves would be overflowing). The New York Times has hailed him as "one of the ten best choreographers in the world"; Variety described his Company as "a national treasure." New York Magazine has described his dancers as an "exquisitely talented company." Important partnerships have been fostered

between the Lubovitch company and other leading dance troupes, including American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Alvin Ailey and Hubbard Street Dance Company.

His full-length ice-dancing version of "The Sleeping Beauty," starring Olympic medalists Robin Cousins and Rosalynn Summers, was broadcast throughout America and Britain. It would be an understatement to describe his version-on-ice of "The Planets," based on "The Planets" by Gustav Holst, as high-impact. Like all of his work, it's excitingly dramatic and deeply affecting. He's created two memorable numbers for Paul Wylie — "Touch Me," a rock piece to the music of The Doors, and "Bach Suite," "more lyrical, spiritually inclined," notes Lubovitch, who has also created an ensemble piece, "Strike Up the Band," for Ice Theatre.

"Lar Lubovitch is one-of-a-kind, a unique creative genius of unassailable artistic integrity who exemplifies everything that Ice Theatre aspires to," states Moira North. "We are proud and thrilled to be associated with him, and to present him with our Special Choreography Award."



Moira North, Paul Wylie and Lar Lubovitch at Sky Rink.