

Ice Theatre's Annual Halloween Skating Benefit



On Thursday, October 25th, the Rink at Rockefeller Plaza will become a bubbling cauldron of witches, ghosts and goblins on skates. Our 9th Annual Halloween Skating Party will once again occupy the ice and adjoining American Festival Cafe for an evening of fun, food and terrific entertainment.

The skating party begins at 6:30 pm and all guests are invited to join us on ice for gliding and sliding in this unparalleled setting at the heart of Manhattan. Skaters from "Angels on Ice" have been invited to share the festivities as well. Children of all ages are encouraged to come in costume and prizes will be awarded in several categories for imaginative excellence. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served for guests watching the fun on ice. At 8:00 pm the company performance will begin. Ice Theatre's ensemble will take to the ice with exciting premieres of new works. The ensemble will be joined by renowned guests Gary Beacom, Rory Flack and Katherine Healy.

After the performance, guests will be served a harvest dinner in the American Festival Cafe. This evening of skating and socializing has become an anticipated highlight of Ice Theatre's season and those wishing to attend are encouraged to order tickets as early as possible, as space is limited. The skating party is a benefit for Ice Theatre and the funds raised go a long way to support the artistic and educational activities of America's first artistic skating company.

1994-95 CALENDAR

1994

September

- 25 Plié Power Workshop
Princeton, NJ
- 26 Company Rehearsals begin
Mon. & Fri., 12:10-1:10 pm
Sky Rink, NYC

October

- 1 Plié Power Workshops
Saturdays, 10:30 am
Sky Rink, NYC
- 3 PPAS Arts-in-Education Program
Sky Rink, NYC
- 10 Plié Power Workshop
River's Edge, NJ
- 24 "Angels on Ice" Benefit
Madison Square Garden, NYC
- 25 Ice Theatre Halloween Benefit
Rockefeller Plaza, NYC
- TBA Duchesnay Tour with Ice Theatre
skaters Akop Manoukian and
Ari Zakarian, through February

November

- 14 "Dishes on Ice" Benefit
Wollman Rink, NYC
- TBA Plié Power Workshop
Brattleboro, VT

December

- 2-4 PGA US Open Competition
- 31 First Night Annapolis
Annapolis Navy Academy, MD

1995

January

- 25 Repertory Concert #1
Rockefeller Plaza, NYC

February

- 22 Repertory Concert #2
Rockefeller Plaza, NYC

March

- 29 Repertory Concert #3
Rockefeller Plaza, NYC

April

- TBA ITNY Apprentice Group Concerts
Rockefeller Plaza, NYC

May

- TBA Past Master Historical Benefit
New York City

June

- TBA Ice Theatre Performance
Sky Rink, NYC
- TBA Chelsea Piers Opening

Schedule subject to change

Message from the Artistic Director

At eighteen I entered Northwestern University and, like most students of the theatre, I dutifully cultivated facility with Theatre-Speak phrases like, "She's a genius", "That was brilliant", "He's a master!". These youthful superlatives seem poignant to me now in light of the wider perspectives time brings. A few years ago, at forty, I saw with fresh eyes the fullest range of artistic powers I've witnessed in my life so far. I realized that "brilliant" must be reserved for a handful of creations, that I had known only two real geniuses, and that one of those was definitely John Curry.

It was a great good fortune of my life to work closely with John as his coach and assistant from 1982 to his retirement in 1990. These years brought the fulfillment of what I think was John's dream: the debut of his skating company in the great opera houses of the world accompanied by full symphonic orchestra, a resounding confirmation that his visions for ice were accepted as high art, applauded across the globe as unique and thrilling theatre.

Aside from the countless artistic and technical lessons I learned from John in that time, there remains the overarching lesson that he himself embodied concerning the nature of real genius. A genius is not just someone who is very good at what he or she does. The term must really be reserved to cover those few like John who are in fact driven and at times shaken by creative visions so compelling that their whole lives become reflections of that vision. Real genius is a compulsion, like an open channel transmitting between beauty and ugliness through all aspects of the owner's life, twenty-four hours a day. At times it's a combative energy, plunged into mortal battle when faced with ugliness, with compromises, with any obstacle to the vision. Most of us, meeting these obstacles, will acquiesce (to preserve peace). A genius has no ability to do that, (though they may feel the desire). Geniuses seem designed to insure that something pure does get pulled into earth form.

The rare performer working on this level seems incapable of a bad performance; an urgent drive toward beauty insures that all gestures toward their audiences are full and deep, grounded in universal laws of rhythm and energy. In the

eight years I watched John skate I never saw him "phone one in". Each repetition seemed new, re-discovered on the spot, created right in front of us. His art had a morality that was unshakable. It sprang from a world compassion so deep that his offerings were intelligible to all audiences. His brand of grace had an authority that was undeniable, real in an absolute sense. Through him we saw perfect grace.

Genius itself seems composed all of opposites, of pulls between extremes. In John these tensions glowed on levels that charged even the smallest dance moments with electricity. Watching him, one felt masculine and feminine energies, introverted and extroverted tendencies, gravity and flight, flow and stasis. As an ice skater he embodied a tremendous tension in bringing highly sophisticated artistry to a form most people know as recreation, an entertainment associated with popcorn and twirling flashlights. His insistence on a new way to see skating was never didactic. Through his example it was simply compelling.

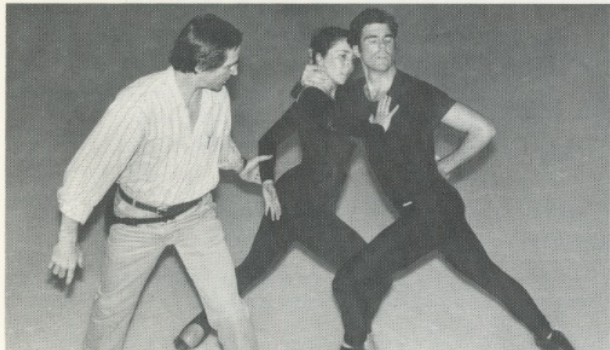
To say John as a skater returned to the lost elegance of former great champions may be partly true. It is also certain that he forged a new elegance based on a supple quality unique to ice movement with its centrifugal supports, the ripple, sway and undulations that are skating's watery part. This style echoed the androgynous energies emerging culturally in the 70's and 80's. John was a pioneer in freeing skating from sexually stereotypical movement.

No one who saw it will ever forget John's outer spread eagle, the luxury of trust it represented, the active surrender to speed and lean, the perfect tension between abandon and control. In that moment lived all his risk and all his craft as an artist/athlete, and that is how I will remember him.

At forty-three I see that genius is, in fact, a rare flame, the tenacious flicker of absolute beauty on earth. It often needs protection from the winds of the world. We must feel deeply grateful to souls who agree to carry it for a lifetime. Their efforts bring us light. Thank you, John, for everything you gave to all of us.

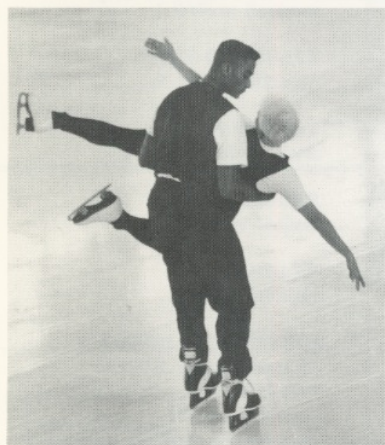
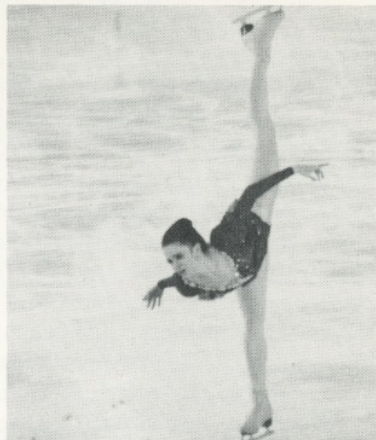
-Rob McBrien

Company Activities



Left: Choreographer Donlin Foreman, works with skaters Beth Woronoff and Doug Webster on "Black Ice".

Right : Katherine Healy, Principal dancer of the Vienna Opera Ballet, lends her artistry to the ice in "Jerusalem".



Left: Hockey Prep Director Sean Edwards and Ice Theatre skater Nina Newby demonstrate collaborate possibilities in this piece, "With Contrasts", conceived by Moira North and choreographed by Alberto Del Saz.

Right: Ensemble piece "The Lark Ascending", choreographed by Rob McBrien.



Summer Rehearsals

Outside, Manhattan shimmered in ghastly heat. Indoors, high above 33rd Street, Sky Rink was a beehive of activity for Ice Theatre's ensemble, directors, choreographers and designers. The invited company of fifteen skaters and apprentices met twice a week to train together, create new repertory and learn existing pieces. The works mounted this summer will be seen at Ice Theatre's performances throughout the '94-'95 season, Ice Theatre's 10th year as a producer of artistic skating.

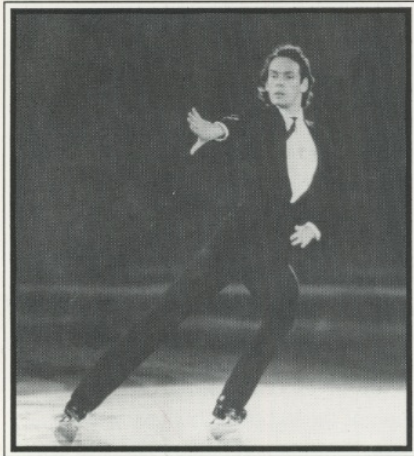
Work days began with Plié Power class taught by Rob McBrien. These sessions introduced new company members to each other and began to mold shared stylistic elements. The classes also were open to students of Sky Rink's Summer Skating School and were enjoyed by competitive and recreational skaters alike.

Following Plié Power class ensemble members had dance class on the floor with some of New York's finest teachers: Donlin Foreman of the Martha Graham Dance Company, Alberto Del Saz of the Nikolais and Murray Louis Dance Company, Robert Garland of Dance Theatre of Harlem, Eva Carrozza, and David Dorfman. These classes exposed participants to a wide range of dance styles and became shared experiences that necessarily go into creating an ensemble.

Back on ice, exciting new repertory works were completed. Donlin Foreman created a dynamic and tempestuous duet. Eva Carrozza, formerly with Lar Lubovitch Dance Company collaborated with ITNY ensemble member James Schilling on a solo movement study. Alberto Del Saz choreographed a kinetic quartet for three men and a woman. Mr. Del Saz, a former competitive skater of Spain, shared skater's understanding of ice movement. A recent work by acclaimed choreographer Laura Dean was set on eight skaters. This dance was created on a commission funded by the New York State Council on the Arts and follows "Sedona Sunrise" as Ms. Dean's second contribution to Ice Theatre's repertory.

These works, along with "The Lark Ascending" by Rob McBrien, were performed at the company's summer showcase in late August. The invited audience left Sky Rink cooler than when they arrived, uplifted by the creative vitality surrounding Ice Theatre as it enters its tenth year.

In Memorium



News of John Curry's passing reached us just as our last issue went to press. Here we remember John through a beautiful piece written by Mindy Aloff for The Nation in 1988. It remains an eloquent testimonial to the greatest skater of our time.

John Curry, the British-born figure skater, made a rare Manhattan appearance this May, performing at Sky Rink as one of the guest stars on a one-time only program hosted by the Ice Theatre of New York. (According to *The New York Times*, Ice Theatre is a non profit skating company founded in 1984 with the aim of establishing "a new repertory on ice.") Curry presented two solos, which together occupied less than ten minutes of the two hours. They swept by like ten seconds. Although he served up leaps and spins, he never offered them seriatim: Neither solo was an exercise in bravura. Instead, we tracked his austere dressed, finely proportioned figure, so lean that his profile seemed a blade, variously speeding up or slowing down while a singer on tape scaled or descended a voluptuous operatic melody. Cleverness, competition, dazzle seemed irrelevant. The focus was sure, the style sustained, the tone steady and true, with the ghost of melancholy in it. Watching him, one marveled again at how intimate and immediate, how much of an art, ice skating can be.

"I always knew that I had one thing to say in life, and one thing only,"

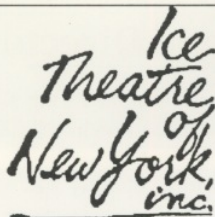
Curry has written. "I believe that skating can be expressive". He's hardly unique in professing the principle, or achieving it--in this country, one thinks of Peggy Fleming, Janet Lynn--but he may be exceptional in his methods. Curry's recipe for expressiveness is almost a formula: choreography based on the nuances of traditional skating technique, especially the legato precision needed for the tracing of school figures; first-rate music from the concert hall, usually from before World War I; and the turnout and carriage of classic ballet. Other skaters freely use these elements: the Ice Theatre program was built around the relationship between skating and dancing. But Curry seems to believe in the power of music, technique and tradition to illuminate as well as charm, and to charm for their own sakes, without any sort of "dumbing down." His style can skirt a narrow refinement, like the high-brow concert tap of Paul Draper. Curry's own public persona, so understated, borders on the recessive. Yet his effect in performance is direct, clarifying, fundamental, profound. He doesn't skate big or flashy--his range has always been angled to focus on this or that formal aspect. But he presents skating so that we perceive it in an enlarged context, in life and death terms. He presents it as an expression of faith.

Curry's choreography takes off from the question of how long the skater's blade can remain in contact with the ice, rather than how soon it can leave. (A statement in the printed program by Ice Theatre Artistic Director Rob McBrien about the skater's "edge" and the importance of centrifugal force seems closely allied to Curry's approach.) One of the most elegant ways he dramatizes this continuity is by threatening to interrupt it. In *Attila*, his first and more magnetic solo with Ice Theatre, the large image was lyrical and uncomplicated, a message of Olympian calm etched in a cursive journey around and across the rink. Within that, however, he distinctly adjusted his speed often, now accelerating effortlessly, now whittling down his attack to the point of stillness, then, just as one expected him

to stop cold, catching a new inside edge and sailing off once more. All of this was matched to the movement of a singer's voice (in an excerpt from Verdi's *Attila*); and the unsettling possibility that the performer might stop, conjoined with his beautiful, cutting line and seamless fidelity to the dynamic of the aria, encouraged an impression of urgency as well as grandeur. *Attila's* vocabulary was very spare: a double air turn, spins in sitting and standing positions, an arabesque (a "spiral" in skating), an attitude, a gliding stance on turned-out legs (a "spread eagle"), heels apart and arms flying wide, like Leonardo's drawing of man. In the second solo, set to an excerpt from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, we saw a magnificent gliding lunge position with a changing port de bras suddenly converted to a taffy-smooth spin; a split jump where the legs parted on one dry accent, like a camera shutter; and a strange, long, dreamlike glide for the entire figure, stretched out face down over the ice. In this solo, as expressionist as Curry's sensibility gets, there were also several decisive full stops followed by a poignant gesture or two in place. *Der Rosenkavalier* had a dark, mimed quality even in the pure skating passages, and those moments when the skater was stilled so the mime might speak seemed particularly chilling...

"For it is the comics who use most inventively and most dramatically the peculiar resources of motion on the ice," Edwin Denby wrote in 1944. "It is out of the extremes of rhythm that skating alone can have that they build their dramatic effects." At the moment, our greatest clown, in this sense, is John Curry, I take down my Watteau catalogue and there he is: the frank brows, the full mouth, the oblique gaze, staring out from the painting known as Pierrot of Gilles. Dramatic, infinitely expressive, and quite alone...

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A New York tribute to John Curry scheduled for April 17, 1995 is currently being organized by Nancy Streeter and JoJo Starbuck. More information will be included in upcoming newsletters.



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The Director's Report

This letter was written in response to an article in The New York Times.

"When Thin Is In, Disaster Can Strike, (Sports, August 1, 1994) hit a frustrating reality that parents and coaches need to face. It is true that girls are entering organized and competitive athletics at earlier ages. This does have its practical merits. The lithe, prepubescent body tends to be more agile. The young skater with narrow hips will have more success with a difficult triple jump. However, as parents and coaches, we must remember the repercussions that can be associated with early athletic involvement. Parents need to be more aware of the pressures that young athletes often encounter before involving their children in demanding programs. They also need to be more sensitive to the warning signs of a developing problem.

As responsible parents and coaches, we need to establish stronger role models such as former world champion Elaine Zayak who was acclaimed for her triple jumps as a young skater then later, as she matured, entered a lull in her competitive career. After being seen as the dark horse, Zayak came back as one of the lights of this year's national competition. The love for sport that has kept Zayak performing and honing her skill after her adolescent peak is the foundation for athletics that we need to foster in our young athletes. The overly stressed idea of winning in only one venue is creating losers... We need to continue to create options for our young skaters who may not be Olympic Gold Medalists, venues in which their skating may be celebrated and enjoyed as expression.

-Moir North

Party Performances

Ice Theatre is available for private performances at Sky Rink, Wollman Rink in Central Park, the Rink at Rockefeller Plaza, or your local community rink. Whether it is a children's party or a corporate event, we can tailor our performances to suit your event. Call (212) 239-4320 for information.

Have Workshops, Will Travel!

Ice Theatre Workshops can be booked for your local community rink or skating club. For more information, call (212) 239-4320.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ice Theatre of New York wishes to thank the contributions of all its supporters. We especially wish to acknowledge the continuing support of the following:

The National Endowment for the Arts
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and the generosity of individual supporters.

Wish List

We are still looking for video equipment to replace the one that, even with loving care, finally gave out. Video is essential to our rehearsal processes and if there are any volunteers who would be interested in taping our rehearsals and performances, give us a call at the office!

The Cutting Edge

Editorial Board: Rob McBrien
Moir North
JoAnn Wong

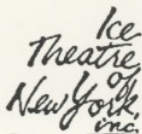
Contributors: Mindy Aloff

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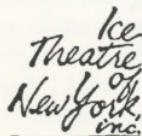
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