

*Ice
Theatre
of
New York*®

CELEBRATING THE JOY
OF DANCING ON ICE



BENEFIT GALA • May 8

Honoree **Jason Brown**

Choreography Award **Rohene Ward**

Alumni Award **Marni Halasa**

icetheatre.org    

HOME SEASON

MAY 5, 6 & 8, 2023
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Rohene Ward on the amazing work he has done.

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ABOUT THE COMPANY

Ice Theatre of New York® (ITNY) creates and advances dance on ice as an ensemble performing art and to provide 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 choreography of 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 have just begun preparations for our first commissioned work with new media artist and creative technologist LaJuné McMillian.
- 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, and Upper Manhattan, annually serving 800 – 1,000 NYC school students.
- Training company skaters and guest skating artists in its weekly Master Edge Classes at Chelsea Piers Sky Rink, 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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Karina Manta



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Liz Yoshiko Schmidt



Aaron Singletary

GUEST SKATERS



Jason Brown



Oona and Gage Brown



Rohene Ward



CELEBRATING THE JOY
OF DANCING ON ICE

HOME SEASON PERFORMANCES

MAY 5, 6 & 8, 2023

BENEFIT GALA & PERFORMANCE

MAY 8, 2023

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ICE THEATRE OF NEW YORK®

Danil Berdnikov, Sarah France, Mariko Heimbach, Theron "TJ" James,
Kata Junninen, Jennifer Kass, Valerie Levine, Karina Manta,
Freddie Moore, Liz Yoshiko Schmidt, and Aaron Singletary

HONOREE

(Performing Gala Night)

Jason Brown

GUEST ARTISTS

Rohene Ward

Oona and Gage Brown

YOUTH PERFORMING APPRENTICES

Georgina Blackwell, Caroline Mura, and Milly Wasserman

LIGHTING DESIGNER/PRODUCTION MANAGER

Chris Lipari



2023 HOME SEASON

(Program subject to change)

MAGNETS

Choreographed by Youth Performing Apprentice Milly Wasserman
Performed by Georgie Blackwell, Caroline Mura, and Milly Wasserman
Music: "Dress" by Sylvan Esso

OF WATER AND ICE

Choreographed by Jody Sperling
Performed by Sarah France and Valerie Levine
Music by DJ Spooky

In the polar regions, a constant interplay takes place between H_2O in its liquid and solid forms. Set to a DJ Spooky score, generated itself by the geometry of ice crystals and the math of climate change data, the dance explores what happens when this fragile balance of water and ice spins out of control. Choreography commissioned by Ice Theatre of New York® with the generous support of the New York State Council on the Arts.

AQUATA (World Premiere)

Choreographed by Mauro Bruni
Performed by Danil Berdnikov, Kata Junninen, Liz Yoshiko Schmidt, and Aaron Singletary
Music: Japurá River from Aguas da Amazonia, composed by Philip Glass
and performed by Kristjan Järvi

Connected on the cusp of violence, a glimpse of serenity. Limitless in power.
Choreography commissioned by Ice Theatre of New York®

RIGHT PLACE WRONG TIME

Choreographed and Performed by Theron "TJ" James
Music: by Dr. John

LA REVOLTE DES ENFANTS

Choreographed by Alberto Del Saz
Performed by Sarah France, Valerie Levine, and Karina Mata
Music: Renee Aubry

Choreography commissioned by the New York State Council on the Arts.

TIMELESSNESS (World Premiere)

Choreographed by Lorna Brown

Performed by Liz Yoshiko Schmidt and Danil Berdnikov

Music: Nocturne in D-flat Major "Un rêve" by Eric Christian

These performances are dedicated to the memory of Liz's Mom, Sandy Kawaguchi.

Choreography commissioned by Ice Theatre of New York®

Made possible by the generosity of Amy Krut.

HIP HOP RHYTHM DANCE

Choreographed by Inese Bucevica, Joel Dear, and Serge Onik

Performed by Oona and Gage Brown

Music by Kool Moe Dee

NEUROCIRCLE (World Premiere)

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.

THIS BITTER EARTH (World Premiere)

Choreographed and Performed by Rohene Ward

Music: "This Bitter Earth" performed by Dinah Washington ft. Max Richter

2023 HONOREE JASON BROWN (MAY 8th ONLY)

Choreography by Rohene Ward

Performed by Jason Brown

Music: "Melancholy" by Alexey Kosenko

ENSEMBLE FOR PEACE

Choreographed by Elisa Angeli

Performed by Danil Berdnikov, Sarah France, Mariko Heimbach, Theron "TJ" James,

Jennifer Kass, Freddie Moore, Liz Yoshiko Schmidt, and Aaron Singletary

Music: "Concerto No. 2" by Sergei Rachmaninoff, performed by David Garrett

This piece is dedicated to the victims of war in Ukraine and everywhere throughout time in our world.

Choreography commissioned by Ice Theatre of New York®

FINALE

WHO'S WHO

ELISA ANGELI (Choreographer) joined ITNY in 2008, and toured France with the company that year. In 2015, she became ITNY's Ensemble Director. Since 2015, Elisa has choreographed many pieces for ITNY. An Italian ice dancer, who has earned recognition from the Italian Federation for Ice Skating, she studied ballet with Ludmilla Vlassova (Bolshoi) and Giovanna Franzosi in Milan, and with Christine Wright at the Gibney Dance Center, as well as Modern and Contemporary Dance at the Open Dance Center, New York, and at the Music, Art and Shows School, Milan. Elisa has trained in aerial silks at Streb Lab and at the Trapeze School in New York and in contortion and extreme flexibility classes with J. Noan and O. Karmansky. Her expertise as a circus arts specialist allows Elisa to bring a unique element of excitement and creativity when skating as a principal performer and aerialist with ITNY. In 2009, Elisa participated with ITNY at the Premiere of *Wintuk* by Cirque du Soleil at Madison Square Garden. In Italy, she toured with *Italian Champions on Ice* and Ghiaccio Spettacolo as an aerialist, and performed in Munich with Spotlight Productions. She choreographed *Musical on Ice* in 2012 and *Made in Italy* for Ghiaccio Spettacolo. Elisa has worked as an aerialist since 2014, with Cirque-tacular Entertainment, with which she performed in the show *The Art of Circus* in September 2016.

DANIL BERDNIKOV (Performer) has been with ITNY for two 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 has 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.

JASON BROWN (Honoree/Performer) At the World Championships in Saitama, Japan, in March of 2023, Jason presented two breathtaking performances with choreography by Rohene Ward. He placed 5th overall and received the highest program component score of the competition. He followed this with a Team Gold at the World Team Challenge in April in Tokyo, Japan. Jason is also the 2015 U.S. national champion, a nine-time medalist on the Grand Prix circuit and a two-time Four Continents medalist. Jason won a bronze medal in the team event at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, becoming one of the youngest male figure skating Olympic medalists. Known as one of the world's most artistic skaters, some of Jason's programs have become iconic, including his Irish step dance free program and his 2021 short program to the music of Nina Simone with choreography by Rohene Ward. His two programs from 2023 will certainly be added to this list. Jason is hugely popular around the world and particularly in Japan, which has prompted him to learn the language, to the delight of his Japanese fans. Jason was the host of ITNY's streaming broadcast "Pivoting Through The Pandemic" in May of 2021. His coaches are Tracy Wilson and Brian Orser (ITNY's 2017 Past Masters Award Recipient).

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 own 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 BROWN AND GAGE BROWN (Guest Performers) are a sister and brother U.S. ice dance team from Long Island, NY. They were crowned the 2022 World Junior Ice Dance Champions last April in Tallinn, Estonia! Since then, they have made the transition to the senior level and have just recently competed for Team USA at two Grand Prix events this past season. Oona and Gage perform regularly with ITNY, while training with their coaches, Inese Bucevica and ITNY choreographer, Joel Dear, for over three years. This year, they have started part-time training with the Ice Academy of Montreal! Oona and Gage are looking forward to this upcoming season and are so excited for this new experience and environment.

MAURO BRUNI (Choreographer/MBA/BFA) first performed with ITNY in 2014. A leader in the professional figure skating community, Mauro works as an ice performer, as well as a coach, choreographer, and show director. He has taught students in the USA, Mexico, Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Austria. Credits include: Ice Theatre of London creator and founder; House of Mauro creator and founder; Navesink Country Club Artistic Director; lead performer in numerous ice skating productions globally, most notably: *Holiday on Ice* - star performer between 2007-2018; show director and choreographer for productions in Europe, North America, and internationally; head choreographer at the Trelleborgskonstakningsklubb in Trelleborg, Sweden 2016-17. Awards include: US Professional Championships Groundbreaker award; Moins5 choreography award in Monéteau, France; ProSkaters Virtual Skateoff champion. Mauro has been recognized as an AIT certified choreographer PSA rated free skating coach and choreographer, and national and international competitor for Team USA from 1995-2005. @maurojbruni

ALBERTO DEL SAZ (Choreographer) is the Director of The Nikolais/Louis Foundation for Dance. His focus is to preserve the Nikolais/Louis technique, repertory, and legacy through teaching and directing. Alberto's work has been funded by NYSCA in collaboration with Ice Theatre of New York. He has choreographed for World bronze medalist figure skater Nicole Bobek and Olympic bronze medalist and World Professional Champion Philippe Candeloro.

His skating work has appeared on Ice-Wars, Grand Slam, and the Professional World Championships televised on CBS, FOX, and ABC networks, as well as the official opening of the Rockefeller Center sponsored by Champions on Ice.

SARAH FRANCE (Performer/Choreographer/Outreach Director) joined the 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, 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.

MARIKO HEIMBACH (Performer) is a former Professional Figure Skater for Disney On Ice and toured with the show for over a decade. She grew up in Tokyo, Japan and began skating at the age of 7. She trained at the Shinyokohama Figure Skating Club in Japan alongside Olympians Shizuka Arakawa and Fumie Suguri. Mariko continued her competitive career in Japan and was an All Japan National Championship competitor. At the age of 17, her career took flight as she began her dream job with Disney On Ice. Since then, she has been to 55 different countries, performed for millions of people as both an ensemble and principal performer, and has met some of the most talented entertainers in the world. She portrayed the roles of Mulan, Pocahontas, Princess Jasmine, Mrs. Incredible, Dory, and many more! Mariko joined Ice Theatre of New York in 2023 and is thrilled to be a part of the Home Season!

THERON JAMES ("TJ") (Performer) made his ITNY debut in the 2019 City Skate Concert Series, when he skated "Presence," a piece which 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.

KATA JUNNINEN (Performer) is a 26-year-old skater, actor/performer, and aspiring choreographer originally from Finland. She's skated since she was three years old, but

for most of her career, she specialized in Synchronized Skating. During her 20-year career, Kata has represented Finland internationally since 2010 and competed at the highest level in the Senior division since 2015. She has represented three countries, Finland, Sweden, and the USA in synchro and finished her career as a member of Team USA on the synchronized skating World Team 2018-2020. She has always loved performing and has a degree in Acting for Film and Television from NYCDA. Kata joined ITNY in 2021 and is thrilled to be a part of the 2023 Home Season!

JENNIFER KASS (Performer) has been a member of the ITNY Ensemble since 2017. A Colorado native, Jennifer spent 16 years competing in the Southwestern Region before following her dreams of becoming a professional performer. After graduating from the University of Colorado with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Anthropology, Jennifer spent five years traveling the world with Disney On Ice. She wrapped up her touring career in December 2016, to pursue more of her dreams in New York City, where she finds herself coaching, choreographing, and performing more than ever. Jennifer has performed on screen for Disney On Ice media, Saturday Night Live, SELF magazine, Sleep Number, and other local entertainment providers. Jennifer is the Director of Figure Skating at Navesink Country Club in Red Bank, NJ.

VALERIE LEVINE (Performer) has collaborated on ITNY events for the past two decades and has been roller-skating as well as dancing tap, jazz, and ballet since the age of four. She started training in figure skating at 11, going on to compete and test until graduating high school, when she turned down Disney On Ice to pursue her Bachelor's degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). At 19, she earned her gold level in Senior Ladies Moves and pre-golds in ice dance before skating professionally. While earning her BS in Product Management Textiles from FIT, she minored in dance and trained at Broadway Dance Center in many dance styles, leading to an off-ice career as a professional belly dancer, ballroom dancer, and samba dancer. She currently teaches and performs these styles worldwide, while managing her own entertainment company Valerina Dance, which can be followed at ValerieLevine.com or on Instagram @Valerielevine.

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, 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/culture sectors. www.chrislipari.com

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. Karina is the author of the young adult memoir, *On Top of Glass* (Knopf 2021) about growing up queer in figure skating.

FREDDIE MOORE (Performer) joined ITNY in 2018. She is a Brooklyn native and U.S. Figure Skating triple gold medalist, who, with ITNY, has performed at events for Chanel, as well as for Phillip Glass at Rockefeller Center. She has also performed alongside Beth Woronoff in the Hudson Valley. She currently coaches skaters of all ages at Sky Rink and specializes in Moves-in-the-Field. Freddie holds a BA in Creative Writing and has published her work in *Electric Literature* and *Hazlitt*, among other places. One of her favorite quotes from Walt Whitman is: "And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?"

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 repertory of ice choreography. Some of Moira's collaborations include productions with opera singer Alicia Hall Moran, singer/composer Theo Bleckmann, and the piece "Of Water and Ice" with Jody Sperling and DJ Spooky. Most recently, in 2022, was 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.

JIRINA RIBBENS (Executive Director) joined the Ice Theatre of New York® staff in December 2004, after serving on the board since the founding of the company. Over the past 18 years, Jirina has overseen ITNY's growth, including the expansion of its outreach programming for public school children, the addition of ongoing edge classes for ice artists, and ITNY's entry 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. Prior to 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.

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. 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 BFA in painting from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2018, has an art studio in Brooklyn, and is the creator of ice fashion line Dansu Wear.

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.

JODY SPERLING (Choreographer), a New York City-based dancer-choreographer, serves as founder and Artistic Director of Time Lapse Dance, where she has created more than 45 works and is the leading exponent of the style of early performance technologist Loïe Fuller (1862-1928). Jody has expanded Fuller's genre into the 21st century, deploying it in the context of contemporary and environmental performance forms. Jody earned a World Choreography Award nomination for her work on the French feature film *The Dancer* and has been commissioned to create a major new work for a forthcoming Fuller documentary. In 2014, Jody participated in a polar science mission as the first choreographer-in-residence aboard a US Coast Guard icebreaker and danced on Arctic sea ice. Since then, much of her work has focused on engaging with climate change. Jody is developing an inquiry called *ecokinetics* that cultivates the relationship between the human movers and ecological systems while providing strategies for climate-engaged artmaking. *Of Water and Ice* represents her second commission for ITNY.

ROHENE WARD (Guest Performer) is one of the most popular and widely traveled show skaters in the world. A longtime principal with Holiday on Ice, he drew standing ovations throughout Europe, and has performed with ITNY's company at Rockefeller Center and in its 2016 home season. His combination of originality, flexibility, and technical strength makes every one of his programs unique, entertaining, and meaningful. A four-time competitor at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, Ward won the Puerto Rican men's title in 2004, and the Professional Open crown in 2016. As a choreographer, he has won the Professional Skater's Association EDI Award three times, in 2015, 2017, and 2021, the first Black choreographer so honored. While his longtime partnership with Jason Brown is his most renowned collaboration, he has also created successful programs for 2023 world women's champion Kaori Sakamoto; 2023 world ice dance champions Madison Chock and Evan Bates; 2022 U.S. women's champion Mariah Bell; and many other competitors. His home base is Chicago, where he and coaching partner Amber Gil direct the skating school at the Glenview Community Ice Center. Rohene serves on the Board of Diversify Ice Foundation, which strives to provide sponsorship, mentorship, networks, and opportunities to underrepresented figure skaters. ITNY is proud to recognize him with the 2023 Choreography Award.



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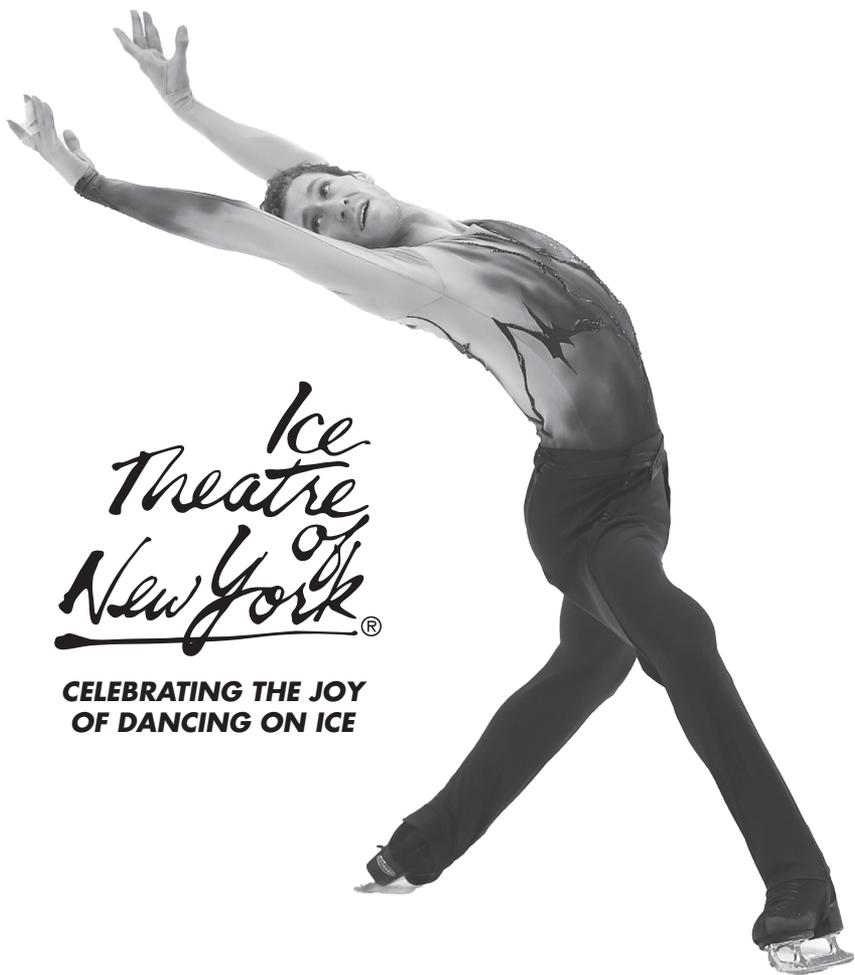
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The Entire Sky Rink Staff, including
Jim Bugenhagen, General Manager
Stephanie Hernandez, Skating Director
Steve Figueroa, Dir. of Operations and Maintenance
Hector Gonzalez, Senior Operations Manager
Sky Rink Maintenance Team
Charles Kerner, Accountant
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