

## Dance



**Cool moves** Ice Theatre of New York dances around the rink and teaches kids how to get into the groove.

Culture

## Smooth skating

Not all dance in New York is performed onstage. Check out a troupe that's taking it to the ice.

By Sara Jarrett

If your family visits the ice rink at Rockefeller Center this winter, you might catch a couple of fast-twirling, fancy-dressed skaters with all the right moves. No, Will Ferrell and John Heder aren't out promoting their DVD: You've stumbled upon a free performance of Ice Theatre of New York (ITNY). A serious modern-dance troupe, the 23-year-old company takes a selective approach to its repertory, having commissioned heavyweight choreographers such as David Parsons, the founder of Parsons Dance Company, and the City Ballet's Peter Martins. "We've been called the PBS of skating," says founding director Moira North, who estimates that one-third of the not-for-profit company's repertory is created by dance choreographers.

The process of staging a work varies depending on its origin. Most pieces performed by ITNY are created

specifically for the company—and the rink—but some were intended for the concert stage. A choreographer who has experience working on ice will have an easier time adapting a work for the new surface while maintaining the integrity of the piece. "If you used a split screen to compare the ice piece with the original, the dance piece wouldn't be absolutely replicated," says North, "because of the intensity of the spinning, the pirouettes, and the frictionless glide that is effortless with this medium." In all cases, ITNY provides a "movement translator"—ideally a skater who has at some point worked with a dance choreographer—to assist.

The company's annual weekend of performances, scheduled this year for Thursday 1 through Saturday 3 at the Chelsea Piers Sky Rink (where ITNY has been based since 1995), will for the first time include a restaging of Twyla Tharp's *After All*, which she created in 1976 for the late Olympic World Champion John Curry. The piece has been credited with ushering in a new era in figure skating by focusing on emotion rather than stunts. Also on the lineup for the hour-long show is a flamenco piece choreographed by

ballroom master Peter DiFalco, a new work titled *Pull* by recently appointed co-artistic director David Liu (who has not only competed in the Olympics but also studied at the School of American Ballet) and *Hot Chocolate*, an upbeat dance choreographed by Douglas Webster for the opening party feting the animated film *The Polar Express* at Rockefeller Center.

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In addition to these performances, ITNY hosts the New Works and Young Artists Series at uptown's Riverbank State Park skating complex. An outreach program for area schoolchildren, the series consists of two daylong clinics (Thursday 15 and 29) during which students have the opportunity to watch a performance by ITNY and then take a skating lesson from the pros. Organizers plan to add more

activities next season, including preperformance workshops that will teach kids how to recognize different choreographed elements. "We're hoping to show them five moves that are very basic—jumps and spins, spirals, things like that. Then every time they see a move, they'll mark it down on a flash card," says Gerri Brios, who's co-directing the free series this year.

"This is not the kind of sport that kids can just fall into," Brios notes, explaining why she finds the workshops so gratifying. "It's expensive. This is not a street sport." She recalls telling one boy last year that he was talented enough to one day be in the Olympics. He looked at her and asked, "What's the Olympics?" Needless to say, he found out fairly quickly. Here's hoping he gets there.

*Ice Theatre of New York performs at the Chelsea Piers Sky Rink Thu 1–Sat 3. See Weekly Calendar for details.*

● For reviews of this and other dance shows, go to [timeoutkids.com](http://timeoutkids.com).