

EVGENIA MEDVEDEVA MOVES TO CANADIAN COACH

International **FIGURE SKATING**

**KAETLYN
OSMOND**

**A DREAM
SEASON**

**SANDRA
BEZIC**

REFLECTS
ON HER
CREATIVE
CAREER

**ALJONA
SAVCHENKO**

**BRUNO
MASSOT**
TURN TO
COACHING

**MADISON
CHOCK &
EVAN BATES**
GO NORTH
OF THE
BORDER



Happy family: Maxim Trankov and Tatiana Volosozhar posed for a series of family photos with their 1-year-old daughter, Angelica.

Photo: Courtesy Sergey Bermeniev





Adam Rippon and his partner Jena Johnson hoisted their Mirrorball Trophies after winning "Dancing with the Stars: Athlete's Edition" in May.

Photo: Courtesy Rogers Media/CityTV

Contents

Features

VOLUME 23 | ISSUE 4 | AUGUST 2018

- 6** **EVGENIA MEDVEDEVA**
Feeling Confident and Free
- 10** **MADISON CHOCK
& EVAN BATES**
Olympic Redemption
- 14** **A CREATIVE MIND**
Canadian Choreographer Sandra
Bezic Reflects on Her Illustrious
Career
- 22** **DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS**
Aljona Savchenko and Bruno
Massot Turn to Coaching
- 24** **KAETLYN OSMOND**
Celebrates a Dream
Season
- 34** **OLYMPIC INDUCTIONS**
Champions of the Past
Headed to Hall of Fame
- 38** **EVOLVING ICE DANCE HUBS**
Montréal Now the Hot Spot
in the Ice Dance World
- 40** **THE JUNIOR CONNECTION**
Ted Barton on the Growth and
Evolution of the Junior Grand Prix
Series

ON THE
COVER



Kaetlyn Osmond

Departments

4 FROM THE EDITOR

30 INNER LOOP
Around the Globe

42 RISING STARS
NetGen Ready
to Make a Splash

44 FASHION SCORE
All About the Men

46 TRANSITIONS
Retirements and
Coaching Changes

48 QUICKSTEPS

COVER PHOTO: SUSAN D. RUSSELL



Gabriella Papadakis drew the starting orders for the seeded men at the French Open tennis tournament, and had the opportunity to meet one of her idols, Rafael Nadal.

Photo: Courtesy Gabriella Papadakis

This off-season has had a lot of interesting twists thus far. Though many of the retirements that have been announced were expected, some of the coaching changes and pairs and ice dance partnership splits were unexpected.

The coaching change that took most by surprise was that of Evgenia Medvedeva, who is now training in Toronto. We spoke to Brian Orser about taking on the Russian star and have reported in this issue on how this change came about.

As we go to print, the International Skating Union (ISU) is in the midst of its 2018 Congress in Seville, Spain. For the first time in history, the ISU live-streamed many of the meetings for all disciplines under its umbrella. I have found it very interesting to watch, listen and learn.

The ISU is committed to promoting skating in developing countries and when a judge from a small nation asked how judges in her country were supposed to get the experience to judge high-level international events, ISU vice president Alexander Lakernik simply said, "develop skating in your country. There is no other way."

That puts the onus directly on the country, which is where it should be. Australia and Spain have been two of the standouts in that regard, developing programs, hosting seminars and sending skaters and teams to international competitions to gain experience and improve.

Two proposals were rejected on Day 1, which gave rise to some interesting debates.

The proposal to raise the age limit for senior competitions was rejected, as was forbidding high ranking federation officials from acting as judges, referees, controllers, etc. at ISU competitions.

Another proposal — submitted by Japan — was that only one jump in the second half of the short program and the last two jump elements (single or in combination) in the second half of the long program would receive a bonus. It was accepted. I know this will come as good news to many of you, as the amendment should ensure programs are more balanced. Back loading will not have the impact on scores as it did last season, so there will be little or no reason for programs to be designed that way. We will have a full report on the important changes in the next issue of *IFS*.

The Junior Grand Prix Series gets underway in late August. We spoke to Ted Barton — the ISU commentator for the seven events — about his experiences over the past four years and how skating has evolved on the junior circuit.

The schedules for this Series, the Challenger Series and the senior Grand Prix Series are listed on the inside back cover of this issue.

Susan D. Russell,
Publisher

International FIGURE SKATING

PUBLISHER Susan D. Russell srussell@ifsmagazine.com

NORTH AMERICAN EDITOR Robert Brodie

EUROPEAN EDITOR Tatjana Flade

DESIGNED BY Laurea Media

EDITORIAL Elina Paasonen, Akiko Tamura, Elvin Walker

PHOTOGRAPHY Vicki S. Luy, Elina Paasonen, Flavio Valle

INTERN Brooklee Han

ADVERTISING/SALES srussell@ifsmagazine.com

CORPORATE OFFICE

International Figure Skating/Laurea Media
270 Queens Quay West, Suite 1301, Toronto, ON M5J 2N4

Please include your name, mailing and e-mail addresses and a telephone number in all correspondence to *International Figure Skating*.

SUBSCRIPTIONS (U.S./Canada) 844-357-2044

International: 973-627-5162

WEBSITE www.ifsmagazine.com



Opening Sequence



Former Finnish champion Kiira Korpi, 29, married Arthur Borges Seppälä, 33, in a romantic outdoor setting at the Villa Balbianello in Como, Italy, on April 30. Guests included Valentina Marchei and Laura Lepistö. The newlyweds honeymooned in Cambodia.

Photo: Courtesy Kiira Korpi

EVGENIA MEDVEDEVA

FEELING CONFIDENT & FREE

BY TATJANA FLADE & SUSAN D. RUSSELL

At the end of an Olympic season, coaching changes, partner splits and retirements take place in the world of figure skating. Few, however, capture global attention.

Though coaching changes are the norm at the end of any season, few make headlines around the world.

One, however, which captured global media attention was that of two-time World champion and reigning Olympic silver medalist, Evgenia Medvedeva.

In early May, while she was on vacation, a Russian television network aired an unconfirmed report that she was leaving her longtime coach, Eteri Tutberidze — a rumor that had surfaced weeks earlier in skating circles, but which Medvedeva denied at the time.

The news exploded like a bombshell in Russia.

Then came the speculation and rumors that not only was Medvedeva moving to Canada to train with Brian Orser, but that she would no longer represent Russia — instead, perhaps another country such as Armenia, the homeland of her father.

On May 7, Medvedeva returned from vacation and went directly from the airport to the offices of the Russian Figure Skating Federation to officially confirm she would be training with Orser.

“As difficult as it was to make this

decision, it is true. I am changing coaches and my new coach is Brian Orser,” Medvedeva said.

“I want to perfect myself and try new methods of training. Probably my new life is starting today. I will do everything possible to improve.”

When asked about switching national allegiances, Medvedeva responded “this is nonsense. With my training base in Canada I have to change my residence, but I don’t plan to change my citizenship. I will continue to represent the Russian federation and remain with the Sambo 70 School while training under Brian. I am doing this in order to try new opportunities and other methods of training. I will continue to represent Russia at the highest level.”

In a statement released by the Russian skating federation, Medvedeva thanked Tutberidze and her coaching staff for “11 valuable years of my life; long, fruitful and sometimes very difficult work; for the huge patience they showed me, and the incredible professional coaching exposure. These people gave me a life in figure skating and led me to the high-level results that I rightfully can be proud of.

“I remember how I came when I was very young. Sometimes it was hard, but they coached, educated, and supported me and, when necessary, pushed me. I grew up under the eyes of Eteri Georgievna. She has had an inestimable input into my development, not only as an athlete but as a personality. I learned many life lessons from her that I will remember my whole life. I spent my childhood at the Crystal ice rink, and I will remember the time of hard but fruitful work with gratitude.

“I hope that as time passes everyone will understand that this was the only possible option for both of us in order to continue to work honestly.”

READING THE SIGNS

Many wondered what had broken down or stopped working in the dream team of Medvedeva and Tutberidze.

But, parting ways with her coach seemed very likely following Medvedeva’s second-place finish at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

After suffering a stress fracture in her foot last fall, she had continued to train and compete. She won both her Grand Prix events and though she took a two-month



“I want to perfect myself and try new methods of training. I will do everything possible to improve.”

—Evgenia Medvedeva

break to heal after NHK Trophy, it might have been too little too late.

Nobody knows what the outcome would have been if Medvedeva had skipped the Grand Prix Series and allowed her injury to fully heal — or if she had followed the lead of Yuzuru Hanyu, whose first competition after suffering an injury at NHK Trophy was the Olympic Winter Games.

While she healed, her training mate Alina Zagitova established herself as the new leader with victories at the Grand Prix Final and Russian nationals.

As the top star of Russian figure skating, Medvedeva chose to compete at the 2018 European Championships, which took place in her hometown of Moscow. Zagitova won the competition, defeating Medvedeva for the first time.

Though Tutberidze wanted Medvedeva, her favorite student, to win the Olympic title in PyeongChang, the injury might very well have been the catalyst for the rift that subsequently widened between skater and coach.

Medvedeva withdrew from the ensuing World Championships and on March 8 went to Germany for a medical assessment. Doctors recommended she abstain from training and rest for two months.

Tutberidze told Russian media that Medvedeva had stopped replying to her messages in April. “I hope to see her before the Grand Prix, and that she has the decency to come with flowers and say thank you,” Tutberidze said.

She also revealed that Medvedeva had asked her at the Olympic Games why she could not have kept Zagitova in juniors for one more year.

Medvedeva knows this would not have been a realistic scenario, but emotions ran high in PyeongChang where, though she had given it all she had, it was not enough to hold off the 15-year-old Zagitova, who claimed the Olympic gold.

“Evgenia is a moral leader and that is good. I raised a girl that is a moral leader, but she could not accept the fact that she was second,” Tutberidze said.

Other top rivals have successfully trained together under the same coach — Hanyu and Javier Fernández, who dominated the men’s discipline throughout the past Olympic cycle, are both coached by Orser. In Medvedeva’s case, it was slightly different in that she was the uncontested leader for two years but came up short in the Olympic season.

On May 8, Medvedeva returned to Germany for an evaluation. Her doctors told her she could resume training.

At the end of the season, the 18-year-old co-hosted a Russian reality show with Alexei Yagudin. He was perhaps able to give Medvedeva advice since he was once in the same situation at age 18.

In 1998, Yagudin left his coach Alexei Mishin and his training rival Evgeni Plushenko and moved to the U.S. to work with Tatiana Tarasova.

Mishin believes that change worked out for everyone in the end.

“It was time for this particular person to make a change.”

—Brian Orser

“Yagudin benefited, because he won Olympic gold in Salt Lake City,” Mishin said. “Plushenko benefited because he stayed in the sport — he probably would have retired if he had won in 2002. Tarasova benefited because Yagudin was the last student she coached to Olympic gold. And I benefited because Plushenko won many more medals. So everyone won in the end.”

Medvedeva is the first Russian skater to move abroad to be trained by a non-Russian coach. In the past, all Russian skaters that trained overseas have done so with Russian or Russian-born coaches, such as Tarasova, Marina Zoueva and Oleg Vasiliev.

This is perhaps another reason why the coaching change was such a hotly discussed topic in Russia.

FORMULATING A PLAN

Orser said he was “completely surprised” when Medvedeva first reached out to him. As both were headed to South Korea in April for a show that one of Orser’s young students, Jun-Hwan Cha, was headlining, Orser suggested they have a meeting after the show was over.

“I had an idea what it was about when she asked if she could have a private meeting with me,” Orser said. “I am sure she was disappointed about the Olympics and was maybe looking for a change. I just had a hunch.

“We had been texting each other for a few days and after the show I arranged a time for Evgenia and her mom to come to my hotel suite. I just wanted to make sure it was kept very quiet and inconspicuous.

“I sort of broke the ice and said to her, ‘I think I have an idea what this is about. I have a feeling that you might be looking for a change.’ She said she was. I asked her why and what would she be expecting from us and she said, ‘I don’t want to say anything negative about the coaching I had. It has been a great experience and I learned so much, but at this stage and age I need to make a change.’

“Evgenia said she wasn’t done yet and wanted to continue skating. She feels there is a lot more she can do and at age 18 she is ready to have a voice. That kind of fits perfectly with the way we work at the Cricket Club.

“We had a three and a half hour meeting, which was great. I went through our system and how we work, how we customize every skater to what they need and she seemed quite excited about that. She said she had the support of the Russian federation, which I feel is very important.

“I think she is very impressed with what Yuzuru and Javier have done and the way they have developed, so perhaps she is looking for some of the same recipe. I guess if you are going to make a change it needs to be a drastic change. I told her what we could offer her, asked her what her goals are and she said she wants to win the next Olympics. I said ‘OK, that is doable.’”

Following that meeting Orser was sworn to secrecy and told only two people about the projected plan — Tracy Wilson and choreographer David Wilson. “I talked to Tracy about it, obviously, and to David because he would be choreographing her programs. The fewer people that knew about it the better,” Orser said. “As soon as it started coming out I told Lee (Barkell) to tell Gabrielle Daleman. She has the top guys to train with, but to have a female at this level . . . Hopefully, they will be cordial but at the same time competitive.”

Orser said David Wilson gained a lot of experience working with Yuna Kim and was able to bring out the very best in her with his choreography. He believes Wilson will be able to do the same thing with Medvedeva.

“I just feel that there is something we went through with Yuna that Evgenia needs. She needs nurturing, to do the

exploration and she needs a little bit of freedom and a voice. David had always said about Evgenia, 'this girl has the potential to be amazing, but she just hasn't gotten to the amazing stage yet.'

"Evgenia has been really good, but I don't know if we can say amazing outside of the technical. We want to take her to the next level choreographically. We already have some great ideas for music.

"She is a lovely girl and I think when we get her personality coming through her skating, it is going to be magical. She has all the tools and I want to see her spirit come through — kind of like the way we saw Yuna evolve."

The first thing he and his team plan to do is "fix her body," Orser added. "Between her ankle and her back her body is broken, so we have to get her really fit. That is the first thing. I talked to Evgenia about this and said, 'we need to get you in the best condition you have ever been, then we can start working on some things.'"

Orser and his team will spend the first month working with Medvedeva on skating skills. He admitted fixing her Lutz would be a challenge, but said she seems to "really be open to anything. She is really excited and David and Tracy are really excited, so I think it is going to be a project we can all kind of embrace."

Orser is no stranger to controversial coaching changes. He was once in a very similar situation and said he knows how it feels. "Always after Olympics, there are changes and I have been on both ends of it," he said.

"I have had the star that has come to me and I have had the star that has left me. I know how it feels on both sides, so I am sympathetic towards Eteri because I have been there. It is so difficult. You have done so much work and you have invested everything into these athletes. But it happens and you just have to take the high road. It was time for this particular person to make a change."

Orser and Tracy Wilson know that Medvedeva's move to Canada and getting her settled at her new training base at the Toronto Cricket Club will not happen overnight.

"It will be a big change for her. She is used to being taught in a group and my understanding is they don't have much time to skate on their own," Orser said. "So we are going to have to nurture this one step at a time and just ease her into it



because it is a total different window of teaching. With us, it is a lot about each skater taking responsibility. She can't go from zero to 60 all at once, we have to ease her into that responsibility."

Shortly after the coaching change was announced, Tarasova contacted Orser. "I thanked her for her support. I hope we can call on her for guidance and wisdom. She is a very smart woman and she has always

had a great vision, so I want to keep her in the loop," he said.

"Evgenia is coming to a place where she thinks and feels she can continue to grow as a skater. She will be training in Canada but representing Russia with all her heart."

Medvedeva said once she had made the decision she could "finally see the light of my future. I am not afraid anymore. I really feel confident and free." **IFS**

MADISON CHOCK & EVAN BATES

OLYMPIC REDEMPTION

BY ELVIN WALKER

With a résumé that includes a U.S. Championships title, two World Championships medals and two Olympic Winter Games appearances in seven years as a team, it would have been easy for Madison Chock and Evan Bates to simply call it a career.

But the four-time Grand Prix finalists are not ready to give up on the dream of standing on an Olympic podium, and are forging ahead in hope of capturing a medal at the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing.

“We believe that we still have a lot of potential to grow,” Chock said. “Last season’s free dance was really an eye opener for us. We realized that we have new and different styles of skating that we have not yet explored.”

Before the 2017-2018 season began, Chock, 25, and Bates, 29, were uncertain about their future in the sport, but after a disappointing ninth-place finish at the Olympics in PyeongChang — their lowest placement ever at a competition — the answer was clear.

“We didn’t know if we would keep going or retire, but after all the drama last season it really put our skating in perspective,” Chock said. “We realized what skating means to us, and we wanted a chance to redeem ourselves.

“We still love skating — and we want an Olympic medal.”

The drama Chock refers to unfolded late last summer as the duo prepared for Champs Camp in Colorado Springs. A sharp impact accident in a run-of-the-mill practice session left Chock with loose bone fragments in the right talus (bottom ankle bone).

Friction from the fragments caused an osteochondral lesion to develop, which resulted in significant pain.



Suddenly the season was in question.

"I was originally told that I would need surgery right away, but we came up with a plan with my doctors and U.S. Figure Skating," Chock explained.

"I had a cortisone shot that helped get me through the season."

The strategy worked — temporarily. Chock and Bates claimed two medals on the Grand Prix circuit and earned a fourth consecutive trip to the Final. In January, the duo captured the bronze medal at the U.S. Championships and earned a spot on the 2018 U.S. Olympic team.

In PyeongChang, however, Chock re-aggravated the injury in the warm-up for the free dance, and then fell on their combination spin in the competition later that day. "It was definitely a surprise because we hadn't made a mistake since the (initial) injury," Chock said.

"After the five-minute warm-up, I was shaken because I didn't know how much pain I was going to be in. I had made a lot of sacrifices throughout the season so that I could get to the Olympics, and I wasn't going to let that slip away."

After the disappointing showing in South Korea, Chock and Bates turned their attention to the World Championships in Milan. They were determined to compete despite Chock's injury.

"Even in an Olympic year the World Championships is a very prestigious event, and competing there is always a highlight," said Bates. "Because Madison's foot was not good, we amended our training plan. We decided that it would be OK to be on the ice less and we did what was needed to do to be prepared, nothing more. So, we did half practices and then would get off the ice."

“ We feel like we still have room to grow and improve. ”

—Madison Chock

The abbreviated training plan translated into a successful competition in Milan, where they finished in fifth place with two strong performances. "It was a good way to end the season," Bates said.

"We have not been on the ice since Worlds. It's weird not being on the ice and I would say that it's been a strange time. Madison obviously can't skate and that is a setback, but after a long season, it's a nice break for us."

"After the World Championships, we were fortunate enough to be able to spend time in Italy playing tourist," Chock added. "We were able to see a lot of the country. We felt happy and free, and we were really able to enjoy ourselves."

In early April, she underwent ankle surgery in Colorado Springs and started the long process of healing and rehabilitation. Chock said the surgery was successful.

"I had to use a scooter for a while because I could not put any weight on my foot, and now I am in a boot and using crutches. I'm learning how to walk again — my foot didn't even know what to do."

SILVER BLADE TOURS, INC.

Skating Tour Experts for
37 Years!



DELUXE TOUR PACKAGES

TO SKATING EVENTS IN THE U.S. & AROUND THE WORLD!

2018 SKATE AMERICA

EVERETT, WASHINGTON
OCTOBER 19-21

2018 SKATE CANADA

LAVAL, QUEBEC
OCTOBER 26-28

2018 GRAND PRIX FINAL

VANCOUVER, CANADA
DECEMBER 5-9

2019 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS

DETROIT, MICHIGAN
JAN 19-27

2019 FOUR CONTINENTS

ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA
FEBRUARY 4-10

2020 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

MONTREAL, CANADA
MARCH 23-29

Claudyne Cassella Hutchinson

TEL: (386) 943-4071 - FAX: (386) 738-2512
2672 FLOWING WELL ROAD, DELAND, FL 32720-8903 USA

claudyne@silverbladetours.com
www.silverbladetours.com



EXPERIENCE THE THRILL AND EXCITEMENT OF LIVE COMPETITION!

Produced by Feld Entertainment

Disney ON ICE

Put **A NEW SPIN** on your skating career

Team up with world-class skaters in a show that warms hearts around the world!

Feld Entertainment® is seeking male and female skaters for U.S. and International tours of *Disney On Ice*. It is your opportunity to truly shine.

Please send a skating resume, photos, a current video (3 – 6 min.) and all contact info to:
Judy Thomas, Talent Director and Production Coordinator,
Feld Entertainment
800 Feld Way
Palmetto, FL 34221 USA

Phone: (941) 721-1234
Email: jthomas@feldinc.com

Chock will need to exercise caution as she moves through the rehabilitation process and will remain in Colorado Springs until her doctors are confident about her recovery.

“I take the boot off for therapy, but I am not sure when it will come off permanently,” she said. “They are estimating I will be able to skate again in July.”

In committing to compete another four years, Chock and Bates decided to look at new ways to grow in the hope of climbing back up the international ranks after losing ground the last two seasons.

“We need to find a spark again that will set us in the right direction results-wise,” Bates explained.

“We feel that we have really put considered effort into developing our skating and taking more ownership of our content.

“That has made us feel like we are progressing, so that also plays into our reasons for continuing. We feel like we have a lot more room to grow, and we feel like we’ve caught onto some things that have made us improve even though our results have not. It’s enough to whet our appetites to know that there is still something for us in the sport.

“It’s not just that we can get a medal of a certain color, but if we skate four more years, can we be better skaters? I really think we can be.”

To help foster that growth, the duo announced in May that they parted ways with longtime mentor Igor Shpilband in Novi, Michigan, and will train in Montréal with ice dancing’s coaching team du jour — Marie France Dubreuil, Patrice Lauzon and Romain Haguenauer.

The training center is exploding with talent behind the boards and on the ice and with the addition of Chock and Bates boasts seven of the top 15 teams from the 2018



World Championships. “We were a part of that kind of environment when we first teamed up in Canton,” Bates pointed out. “It was an environment that inspired and pushed us. We need that kind of environment at this stage in our career.”

“We feel like we still have room to grow and improve. Making a coaching change would be the best way to push ourselves to a new level,” Chock added.

The duo plans to move to Montréal sometime in July after Chock’s rehabilitation is complete. Though clearly excited about the move, relocating is never easy — especially when the new training center crosses a border into a new country.

“Just moving in general is daunting, and then add in the foreign country part and it’s compounded,” Bates explained. “It has made me consider things previously taken for granted, like cell phone plans, bank accounts and visas. But, it is exciting moving to a bilingual city and I’m hoping to take advantage of the opportunity to learn French.”

“It will be a big change for us,” said Chock. “Neither of us has ever lived outside the United States, but I am really looking forward to living in a big city and starting a new chapter in life together.”

“ We need to find that spark again... ”

—Evan Bates

Fortunately, Chock and Bates will be able to rely on one another on and off the ice as they make the move to Montréal.

“When we first came together as a team, I was coming off a serious injury and Madison helped to reinvigorate my love of skating,” Bates recalled. “Down the road, we had ups and downs — things were going great and then the results went away. During that time, we really leaned on each other.

“The only person who understands that is the person next to you. After the Grand Prix Final in France two seasons ago, we took a trip to Paris and talked about becoming a couple.

“We were always told not to put all our eggs in one basket, but we knew that we loved each other so we decided to become a couple.”

Until the move, however, Bates will remain in Colorado Springs with Chock as she makes use of the world-class facilities at the U.S. Olympic Training Center. While playing the supportive role, Bates will work on his fitness with the experts “at his fingertips.”

“The team out here is so good,” he said. “It’s a very focused environment.

“Everything we need is right in front of us, and our outlook is really positive.” **IFS**

WILLY BIETAK PRODUCTIONS, INC. CASTING



NOW CASTING:

- Male and Female Soloists
- Pair/Adagio Skaters
- Dance Teams
- Comedy and Variety Acts

For our worldwide award-winning productions and Royal Caribbean cruise ships



Please send a current skating video, resume and photo to:
Sylvia Froescher, Producer
 Sylvia@BietakProductions.com
 1404 Third St. Promenade, Ste. 200
 Santa Monica, CA 90401
 Phone: (310) 576-2400



For more information, visit
 BietakProductions.com/casting



UNIWORLD
 TRAVEL & TOURS INC.

Premium Skating Tours for over 30 years

2018 SKATE CANADA Laval, Québec	2018 GRAND PRIX FINAL Vancouver, Canada
2019 CANADIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS Saint John, New Brunswick	2019 WORLD FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS Saitama, Japan

Uniting the world one memorable trip at a time.

Angela Hildebrandt (416) 493-3322 ext. 321
 Toll free: 1(800) 268-3159 ext. 321

Email: angela@uniworldtravel.com
Web: www.uniworldtravel.com

235 Yorkland Boulevard, Suite 300,
Toronto, Ontario M2J 4Y8
TICO # 2226169

A Creative

SANDRA BEZIC REFLECTS



PHOTO: MARK O'NEILL

Mind

ON HER ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER

BY SUSAN D. RUSSELL

She has enjoyed a multi-faceted career many may dream about, but one that few have ever had the opportunity to actually live.

From a teenage pairs champion to award-winning choreographer, there is no creative medium Sandra Bezic has not explored. Her career has spanned a multitude of platforms from crafting programs for Olympic champions, to producing and directing award-winning television specials, tours and live shows.

Sandra Bezic's first foray into the world of skating was in a pairs partnership with her brother Val Bezic. At ages 13 and 17, respectively, the siblings won the first of five consecutive Canadian pairs titles in 1970 and placed 14th in their World Championships debut a couple of months later.

The teenagers represented Canada at four ensuing World Championships, rising to fifth in their final outing in 1974. In their only Olympic appearance, the duo placed ninth at the 1972 Winter Games in Sapporo, Japan.

Injury and burnout forced Bezic to retire at age 18. She described the next three years as a difficult experience. "I had been travelling and competing internationally since I was 12. I went through something

that I think is so common with so many skaters, but at the time there was no support," she explained. "I was one of those kids that all of a sudden hit the wall and your life falls apart because your identity, your whole life, is now shattered. I went through some tough times and three very difficult years that I don't talk about — ever.

"At the time I had no idea what I was going to do because you always think the script is written and then all of a sudden, it's not."

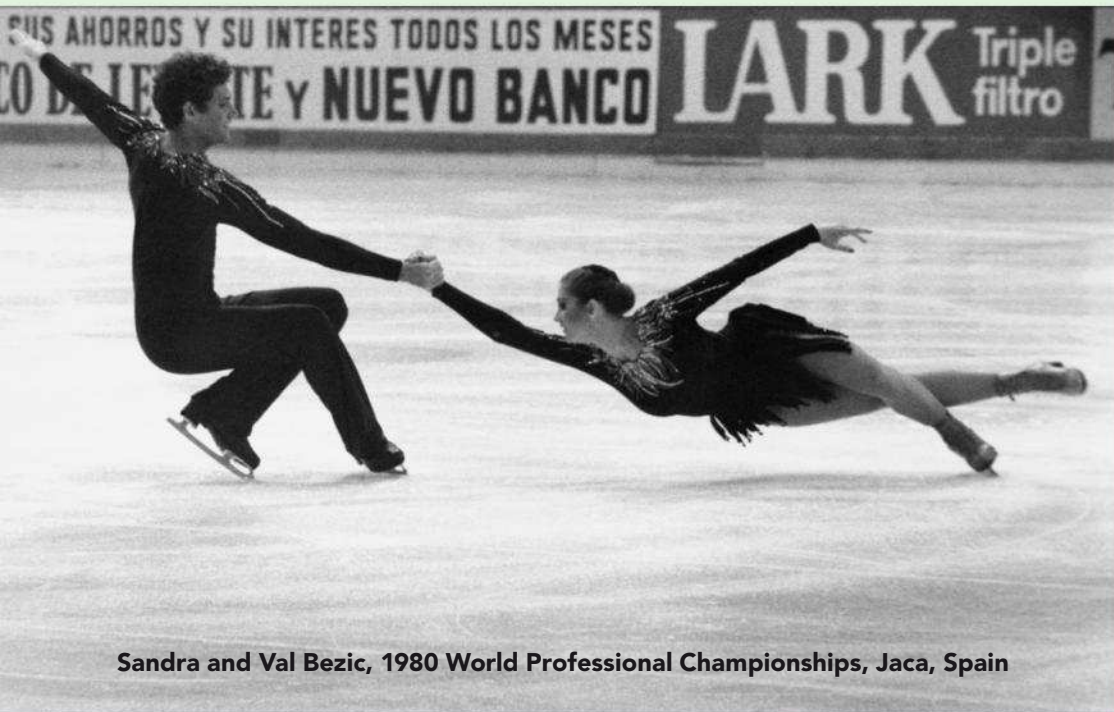
Bezic finally returned to the skating world and in 1980 she and her brother won the World Professional Championships in Jaca, Spain.

When the siblings officially retired, Bezic found herself once again at a crossroads.

She felt she had something to contribute to the skating world outside of competing but was not exactly sure what that was. "I thought my sort of innate ability to move to music and all the incredible experience I had gained during my career as an international competitor was something I could offer," she said. "So, I put the word out to local clubs that I was interested in choreographing young skaters.

"At that time, there was really no such thing as a choreographer — or if there was, it was very rare because coaches did their own choreography with dance choreographers sometimes being brought in. But I thought I had something to offer."

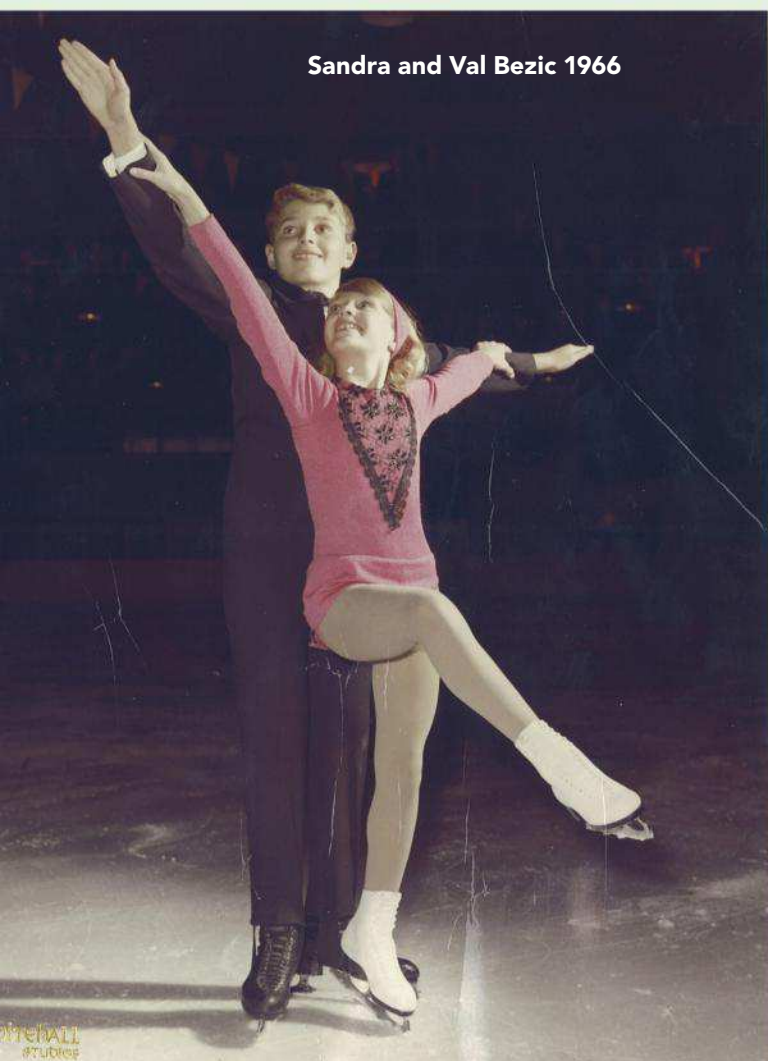
One of the first calls she received was from former Canadian coach Louis Stong, who contacted Bezic in the summer of 1979



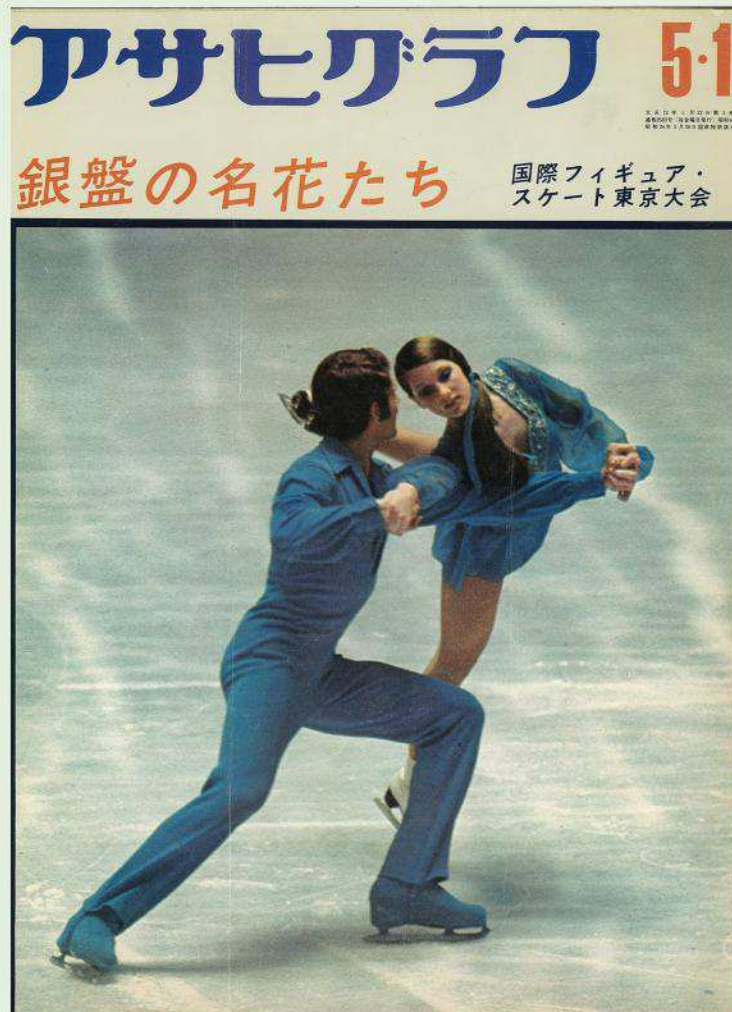
Sandra and Val Bezic, 1980 World Professional Championships, Jaca, Spain

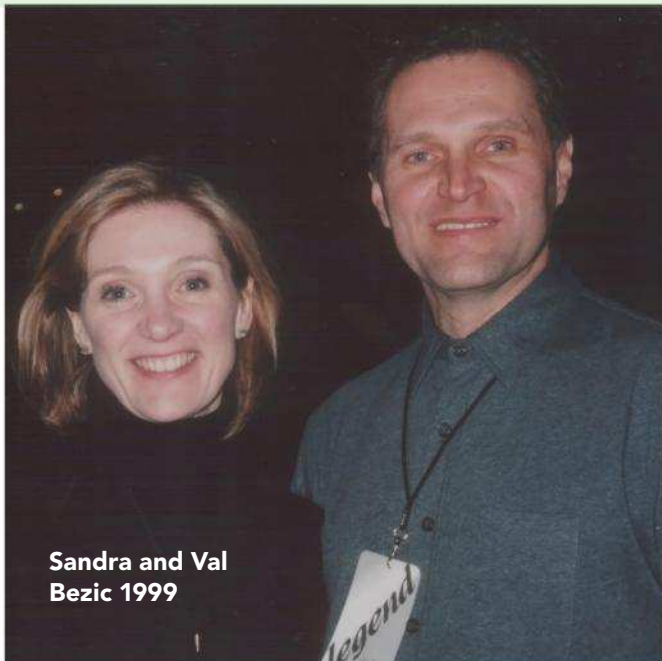


Japanese magazine covers: above 1972, below 1973

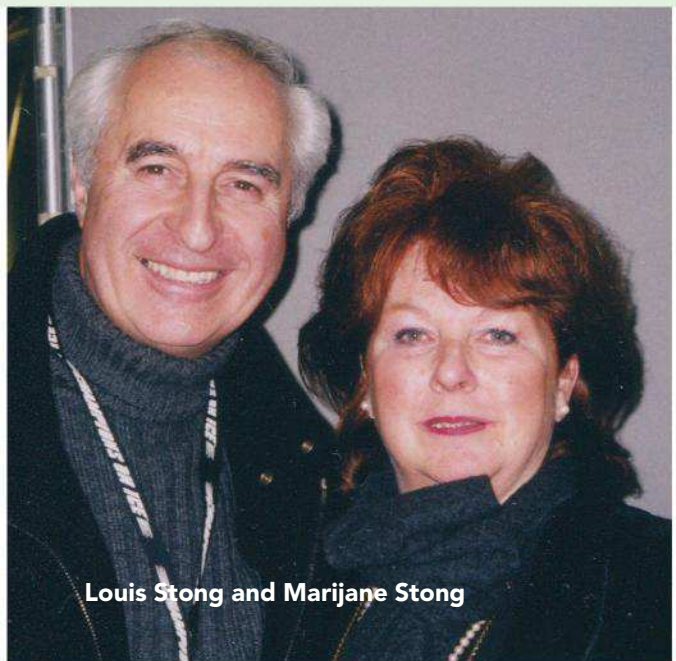


Sandra and Val Bezic 1966





Sandra and Val
Bezic 1999



Louis Stong and Marijane Stong

to ask if she would work with Canada's top pairs team, Barbara Underhill and Paul Martini. The duo had claimed the first of five consecutive national titles earlier that year and had recently moved to train full-time with Stong.

"He did not want to take them on, on his own, and he asked me if I would collaborate with him," Bezic recalled. "They were kind of like my first students. It was a comfort zone for me because they were pairs skaters at an international level. That was what I was familiar with and where I was comfortable."

"Louis and his wife, Marijane Stong, took me under their wing. I learned so much from them. I also learned so much from working with Barbara and Paul who, at the time, could do all the tricks but were still physically mismatched. It was my mission to figure out what style would work for them. That is how we began our journey together."

Bezic accompanied Louis Stong and the team to the 1980 World Championships in Dortmund, Germany — her first as a coach/choreographer.

"I still remember that whole Worlds thing," she said. "Standing by the boards my knees were knocking, and my head was pounding so hard that I thought everyone could see it."

"With every element Barb and Paul executed in their short program, I took one giant step backwards. I was practically in the Zamboni corridor at the end of the program," she added with a laugh.

"After that, we all went to competitions together and we became this sort of crazy foursome. I went through it all — the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo (where Underhill and Martini placed a disappointing seventh) and the 1984 Worlds in Ottawa (which Underhill and Martini won), and then on into their professional career. We kind of grew up together. We all got married and at one point, Paul's wife, Elizabeth, Barbara and I were all pregnant at the same time. It was hilarious."

Another exciting chapter in her career began when renowned coach John Nicks approached her at 1982 Worlds and asked if she would be interested in choreographing the principal skaters in *Ice Capades*. Bezic said she "jumped at the opportunity."

"The next four summers I spent in Las Vegas and California working with skaters in that company, which was great as I was getting that professional experience as well."

That same year Bezic was asked to co-choreograph a television special — "Romeo and Juliet On Ice" — starring 1976 Olympic champion Dorothy Hamill. Bezic, who also choreographed professional show programs for Hamill at the time, said, "it was just the best experience ever."

"I learned a ton from doing that TV special. It was where I got my first real understanding of choreography for the camera. It turned out to be a gorgeous show in my opinion. I translated everything the director wanted on to the ice and we worked very much as a team. It was

shot in a small studio in Toronto. Brian Pockar was Romeo and Toller Cranston was Tybalt."

CHAMPIONS & TOURS

In 1987, Bezic was contacted by Brian Boitano's coach, Linda Leaver, who asked her to choreograph Boitano's programs for the 1987-1988 Olympic season.

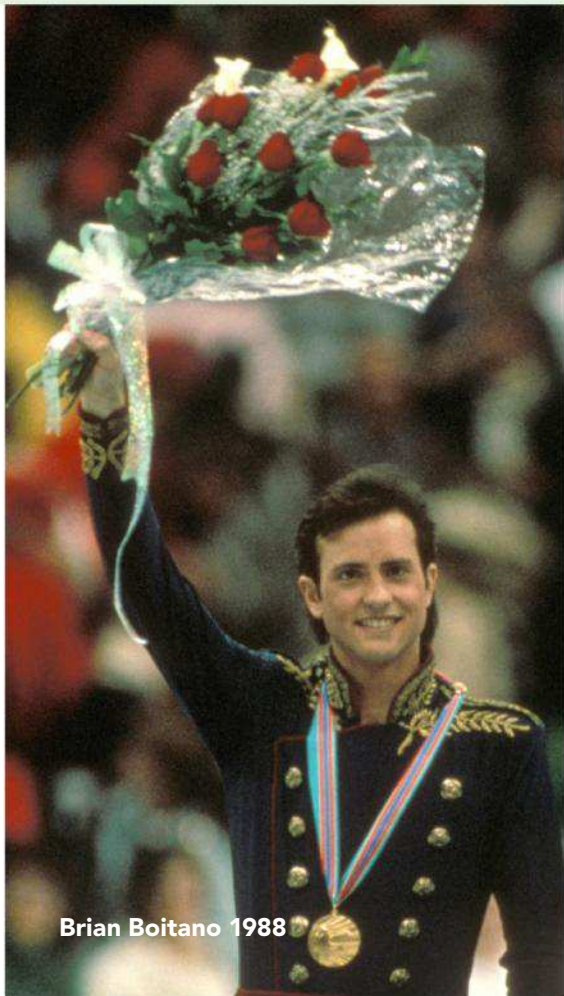
"That was kind of when things got crazy," Bezic recalled. "I did not take any heat from the skating world for working with him, just from the press that come in every four years and don't know the background. Brian Orser had an American choreographer (Uschi Keszler) and nobody cared."

"In the skating world there are no borders, so it became something only with the reporters who did not know anything. Certainly, the skating world didn't care because they knew what was going on."

Though he had the technical goods, Boitano had a reputation for "robotic" performances, but in a few short months of working with Bezic he transformed into an artist and went on to win the 1988 Olympic and World titles over Orser.

Bezic choreographed the programs that took Kristi Yamaguchi to Olympic victory in 1992, Tara Lipinski's triumph in 1998 and China's Chen Lu, who claimed Olympic bronze behind Lipinski.

Bezic was the creative genius behind Kurt Browning's iconic "Casablanca" program, which took him to the 1993 World title.



Brian Boitano 1988



Lu Chen

During that era, she also choreographed programs for luminaries such as 1990 World champion Jill Trenary, China's Xue Shen and Hongbo Zhao (1999-2000 season), and Canada's Joannie Rochette.

Katarina Witt's final competitive long program "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," which she performed at the 1994 Olympic Winter Games, was a Bezic/Witt collaboration.

The music included a peace message for the people of Sarajevo, the site of Witt's first Olympic victory 10 years earlier.

In 2009, Canadian choreographer David Wilson asked Bezic to craft a show program for his student, Yuna Kim. Bezic chose Rihanna's "Don't Stop the Music," which brought out a sassy side of the Korean star no one had ever seen before.

"When you work with someone as talented as Yuna, you feel the pressure of having to live up to their talent, of wanting to do them justice and give them something that is really at their level," Bezic said. "I really enjoyed working with her. She is a sweetheart."

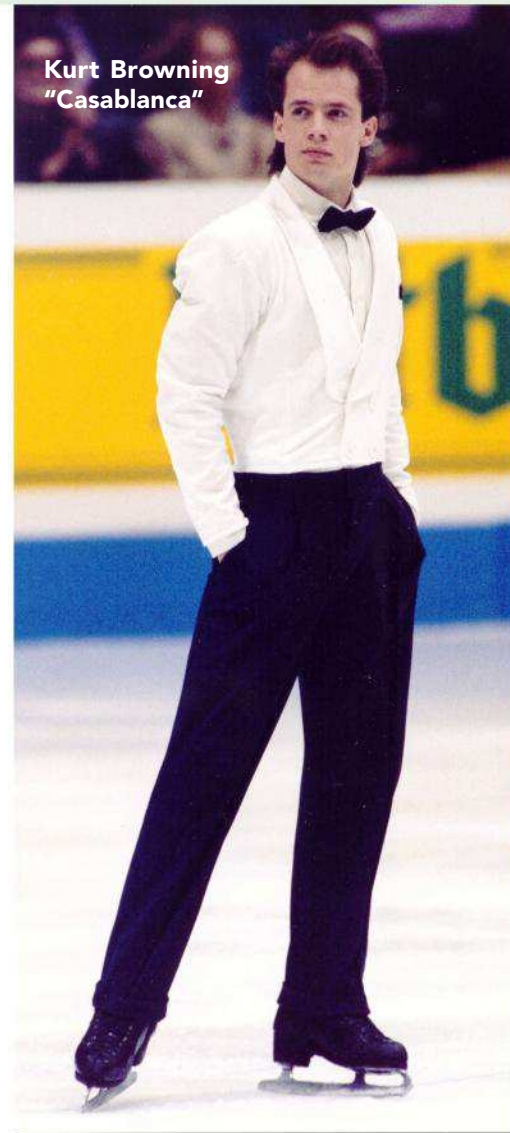
Bezic directed and co-choreographed three critically acclaimed tours starring Boitano and Witt (*Skating, Skating I* and *Skating II*), which criss-crossed the U.S. from 1990 to 1992.

She became the director, co-producer, and choreographer of the *Stars on Ice* tour in 1992, a position she would hold for 11 consecutive seasons. In 2003 she won an Emmy Award for "Outstanding Choreography" for her work with that tour.

She was also the creative force behind the popular "Skate the Nation" tour, which played to Canadian audiences across the country from 1994 through 1997.

CREATIVE SPECIALS

The 1988 Olympic Winter Games had marked a turning point in Bezic's career. Now in high demand, many doors opened for her as a choreographer for film and television specials. "It just



Kurt Browning
"Casablanca"

snowballed. Every single opportunity was a learning experience for me," she said. "It was an exciting time for skating and I was really fortunate to be working in that era."

Bezic choreographed Boitano's 1988 television special, "Canvas of Ice," and was the creative genius behind Witt's 1989 award-winning film, "Carmen on Ice."

In 1990, Bezic received an offer she could not refuse. Marlon Brando was shooting a comedic movie — "The Freshman" — in Toronto and wanted to add a skating scene. Bezic became his personal skating coach and eventually partnered him on-screen in a cameo role.

"I got a phone call from the producer who said Marlon had decided he needed to learn how to skate," Bezic recalled with a laugh. "Over a three-month period in Toronto and New York, I would meet Marlon in an arena a couple of times a week. He had skated in the past, but not for a long time.

The first day he came without a helmet and I urged him to use one. He refused but after taking a nasty fall, he wore a helmet the next day.

“We would skate around, and I would be holding him up...or he would stand at the boards and tell stories. He was a sweetheart — funny, kind and completely adorable.”

Canada’s CBC network also came knocking on her door to produce television specials with skating stars such as Orser and Browning. At the same time, Bezic was working with Disney, producing many of its skating specials for the small screen.

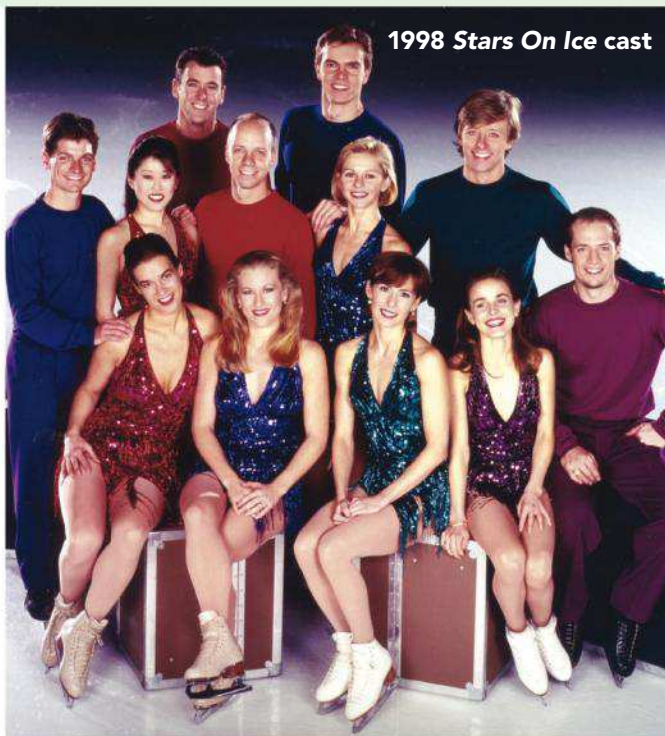
Orser’s “Night Moves,” which she co-produced and choreographed in 1991, won a Gemini Award (the equivalent of an Emmy in the U.S.) in the “Best Variety Program” category. The production also won first prize at the prestigious 1992 Rose d’Or (Golden Rose) competition in Montreux, Switzerland.

One of Bezic’s most successful and best-known works for Canadian television was Browning’s 1994 special “You Must Remember This,” which included his iconic “Singin’ in the Rain” program. This special also won the Rose d’Or competition in 1994. “We did some pretty amazing stuff in that special. It was heaven to make,” Bezic recalled wistfully.

“I watched every Humphrey Bogart movie I could get my hands on. It took months and months of preparation, but we had time, we had a budget and Kurt was — and still is — a superstar in Canada.

“The production crew, Kurt and myself discussed every detail — what Kurt had to offer, what he wanted, what his dreams were and what he had always wanted to do on ice. One thing led to another and one of the ideas was to recreate ‘Singin’ in the Rain.’

Frances Dafoe, who designed



1998 Stars On Ice cast

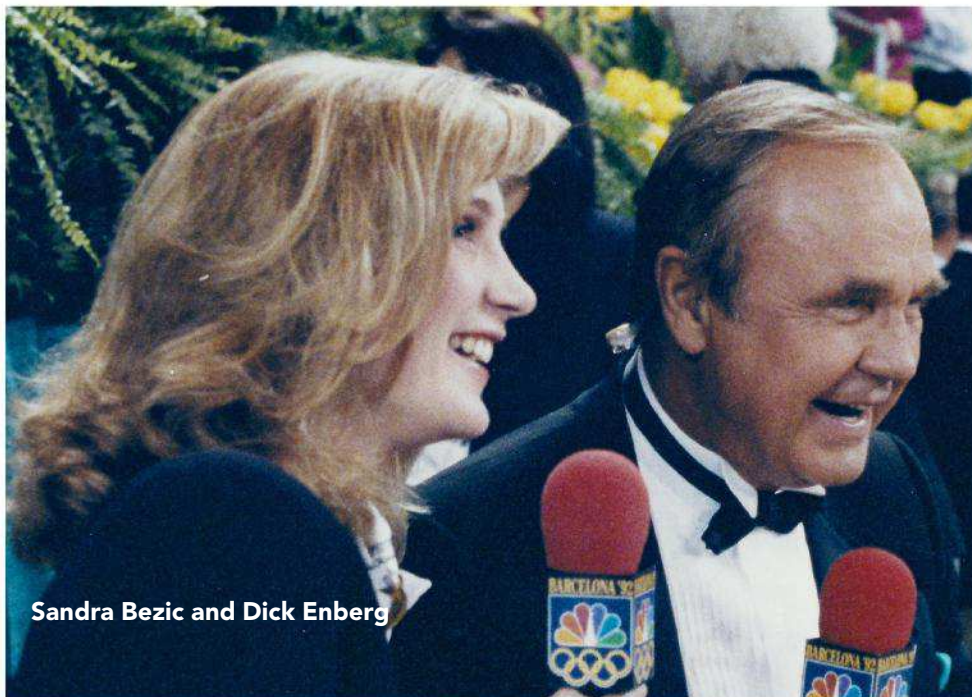
- The Globe and Mail, Canada’s national newspaper, named Bezic one of the “Most Powerful People in Sport” four times: 1989, 1994, 2009 and 2010
- In 1996, Bezic co-authored a book: “The Passion to Skate: An Intimate View of Figure Skating”
- In 2012, Bezic was inducted into the Skate Canada Hall of Fame

“Martini & Underhill: One Last Time” in 1998, and the “Legendary Night of Figure Skating” for the opening day of Toronto’s Air Canada Centre in 1999.

ON THE AIR

A call from America’s CBS network in 1990 set Bezic on yet another new career path, this time as a figure skating commentator. She does not recall how or why she got the job — “it was just one of those scary things,” she said.

Bezic made her on-air debut for the network at the World Championships that year, which led to her being hired by both CBC and NBC to cover ongoing figure skating events. Little did she know at the time this would lead to a television career that would span 24 years, and six consecutive Olympic Winter Games.



Sandra Bezic and Dick Enberg

"I appreciated being invited into the television fold. I loved the opportunity and the people I worked with," Bezic said. "One of the things I learned was to look at skating from an outside perspective. When you commentate, you are not looking at skating from a super fan point of view, but from a casual viewer's perspective. Sitting in that seat gave me an insight, a critical eye.

"I learned so much about the sport when I looked at it from that angle. It was completely different to the one I have when I am in the thick of it choreographing or watching from the stands.

"It made me think about a piece of choreography from all angles — not just something that would satisfy the judges, but something that also satisfied the viewing audience. You see what works and what doesn't for different reasons and it gave me a better perspective. I applied all that knowledge to my work in choreography, production and directing."

CHARITABLE BATTLE

The concept for the award-winning show "Battle of the Blades," which paired figure skaters with hockey players, was born in the kitchen of Bezic's home one night as she and her partner, Kevin Albrecht, watched a segment of "Dancing with the Stars."

"Kevin and I were having a conversation and he asked me if I thought figure skaters and hockey players could ever do something like that," she recalled. "I replied, 'only if

it has a greater purpose. There would be no good reason for them to do this at the end of their careers other than for charity so that it wouldn't become a gong show.' Kevin said, 'OK let's write it up.' So, I wrote it up — in my kitchen."

Bezic and Albrecht took the idea to Insight Productions and together they presented it to the CBC. Although it was well received, there was no money in the budget to produce such a show at that time. It would be three years before the concept became a reality.

"When CBC finally said it's a go in 2009, we were too panicked to think about how it would turn out," Bezic said with a laugh. "You don't play it out in your mind or imagine it being a hit or anything like that — you just put your nose to the grindstone and do it.

"Kevin cast the hockey players and I cast the figure skaters. There were 150 people working on the show aside from the skaters and hockey players. It was a massive amount of work, but it was fun, exciting — and scary.

"Hockey players and skaters are cut from the same cloth. They are fierce competitors. They admired and respected each other and worked so hard. We did not want it to be a gong show or a reality show, so everything was honest — nothing was imposed, scripted or fabricated for story lines. We knew the hockey players would walk in a heartbeat if they thought anything was false.

"It was so much fun watching them change from jocks into artists. The light bulb turned on for all of them at different stages and all of a sudden, they were participating in the music choices and caring about the choreography. It happened to each of them in varying degrees at different points in each series. It was so cool to watch that evolution each year.

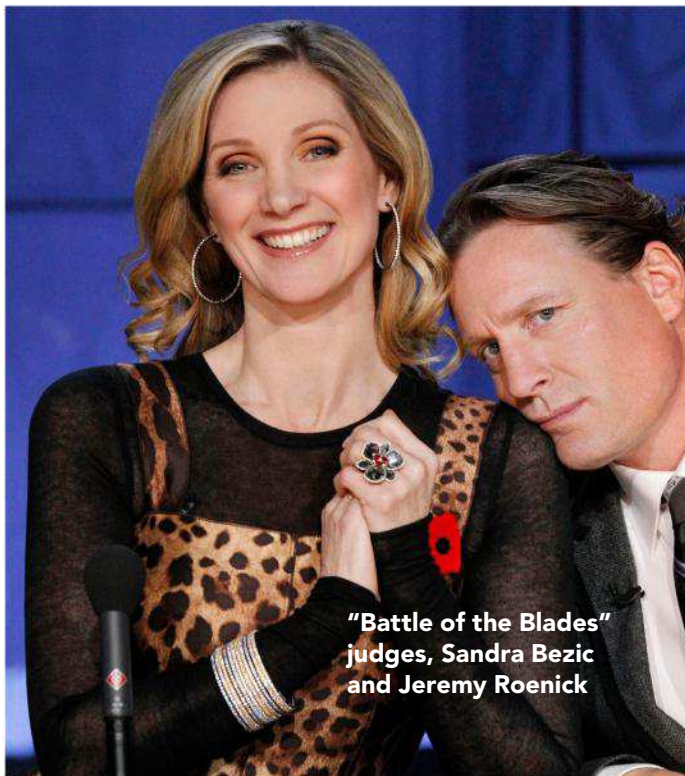
"So many of them have come up to us since then and asked, 'when is the tour?' They loved training, competing and being out in front of the crowd again, and they miss all of that."

The show raised more than a million dollars for charity and remains the highest rated Canadian original reality television series of all time. Bezic earned a Gemini Award in the "Best Variety Program or Series" category as the producer.

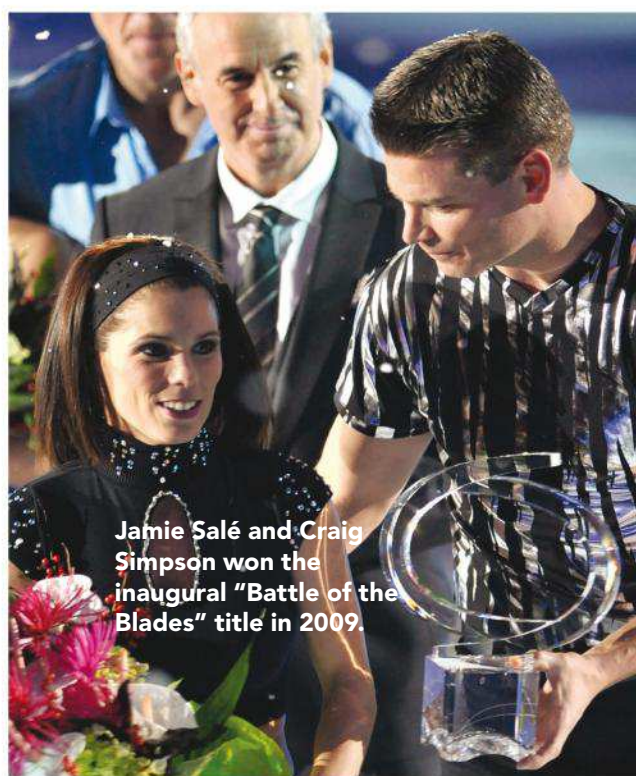
The show was cancelled in April 2012 due to government budget cuts and a new executive team at the CBC. "We were disappointed, but really grateful for the four years," Bezic said.

OLYMPIC REFLECTIONS

This 2018 Olympic Winter Games marked the first time in more than two decades Bezic watched the action from her living room instead of a broadcast booth. Though she found it educational to view the Games from a different perspective, it was still a big change. She said she captured her thoughts in a personal online blog "because I had to do something."



"Battle of the Blades" judges, Sandra Bezic and Jeremy Roenick



Jamie Salé and Craig Simpson won the inaugural "Battle of the Blades" title in 2009.

"I thought Aljona Savchenko and Bruno Massot's long program was genius, just spectacular," Bezic said. "Christopher Dean's program was perfection, and their performance was perfection. Their story, and her story... It was unimaginable what she accomplished and what she and Bruno accomplished together.

"And what happened in their partnership between the short and long programs — how they turned it around when it could have gone further south so easily after the short.

"The two of them rallied together, which for me was a textbook lesson in a partnership in pairs skating.

"Yuzuru Hanyu is a rock star. His ability to command the audience, his understanding of the theatre of the moment is just brilliant. He gives the audience exactly what they want, and he commands the stage like a rock star. He just willed that victory to happen.

"Watching the ice dance competition on TV ... I felt that the power of Tessa (Virtue) and Scott (Moir) — like Yuzuru — overshadowed everyone else, and they were not going to settle for anything but first. They reached through and beyond the skating world. I don't understand how it could have been as close as it was in the free dance between Tessa and Scott and the French team. The Canadians owned it. The French team are glorious, but Tessa and Scott had that little bit of magic.

"I thought it was terrible what happened to the French team with that costume failure (in the short dance), and I did not understand why the referee could not just stop the performance and fix the damn dress. To me that was nonsense. For their whole Olympics to turn a corner because of a costume malfunction is just not fair. I know why the rule is in place but in my opinion, it is so stupid.

"In the ladies... I have a huge problem with back-loaded programs and I have a huge problem with young girls — not them personally, but with the rules. The girls themselves are delightful. Of the Russians, I preferred Evgenia Medvedeva because of her soul and I felt that she should have won. I also thought Kaetlyn Osmond was under-marked in the short.

"I choreographed Lipinski's 1998 Olympic programs so obviously I could not be biased there, but Tara had the fairy dust. Who had the fairy dust in Korea? I am not sure, but I think the rules need to change. Don't take anything away from the 15-year-olds that have won competitions. You can't hold it against them for playing by the rules — but change the rules.

"I felt there were two strikes against Kaetlyn. She had a mature performance with jumps, choreography, power and a fully produced program, with no weaknesses on any front. She was my overall preference for the sake of skating. I thought she was the best."

NEW VENTURES

Bezic dove back into a choreographic role in January when Wilson asked her to design a show program for Javier Fernández. They settled on "Prometo" ("I Promise"), by Spanish pop star Pablo Alboran, as a nod to his heritage.

Wilson also turned to Bezic for insight and ideas for the group numbers for the "All That Skate" shows that he choreographed and directed in South Korea in late May. Bezic described both experiences as "invigorating."

She is currently working on concepts for new productions and has a few mapped out for shows and specials. "I have not pursued them because I keep getting pulled away," the 62-year-old said. "They percolate for a while and I develop ideas and visualize what potential there is or how it could be done or where."

Learning that she will be inducted into the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame at the 2019 U.S. Championships next January has been one of the highlights of her year, Bezic said. "It was great news. I happened to be with my 93-year-old dad when I got the call and he was really, really happy. I am thrilled, I am honored, I am humbled — I am delighted." **IFS**

CREATIVE MUSINGS

"Part of a choreographer's job is to adapt to each person you work with. Skating is different to dance where the choreographer creates a piece on the floor. There the choreographer is God, and everyone is obedient to the choreographer's wishes.

"In the skating world it is very different when it comes to competitive programs. It is much more collaborative, and the goal is always to create something that is true to the skater. It is so individual.

"For me, it has always been about the private moments with a skater who has given you their trust. When you are sharing those hours alone in the rink you sometimes witness something magical — perhaps they have done something exactly as you had hoped, or they have taken it somewhere you would not have ever imagined. When you get on the ice you lose yourself, you let go of the pressure and the insecurities you always have and just get lost in the work — those are precious times and it is those private moments that I cherish the most.

"That is what I crave and what I love about that collaborative relationship, whether it is with skaters or production people — that collaborative creative process is for me the absolute most exciting.

"In a competitive situation you are dealing with someone's life, someone's career and I don't know a choreographer who doesn't take that very seriously and stress over every single decision because you don't know what impact it will have on a skater's career and life."

"Choreography is also a collaborative effort with the coach. Some give you completely free rein, others are completely hands on and others are somewhere in the middle.

"There is no one program or skater I can single out in my career. I have had a unique relationship with each of them, connecting with them, trying to figure out what makes them tick, and what their dreams are even if they don't talk about them. I try to get inside the skater, to get them to reveal themselves and create something with them that they then will hopefully love and cherish. It is that process that keeps me alive.

"I am very lucky to have had so many opportunities. Every experience added to my choreographic repertoire and everything has kind of complemented the other.



Aljona Savchenko  **Bruno Massot**

DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

BY TATJANA FLADE

Aljona Savchenko and Bruno Massot closed out last season in spectacular fashion with a runaway victory at the World Championships in March.

Following the medal ceremony that night, Savchenko and Massot lingered, enjoying the moment to the fullest as they signed autographs and flags for fans, took selfies with spectators, and hugged their partners in life, their parents, relatives and friends who had come from Ukraine, Germany, France and Italy to see them.

“I didn’t want to leave the ice after the awards ceremony because it was so wonderful,” Savchenko said.

“I wanted to go back in time and relive everything again because it was so beautiful. We would not have been able to skate that way without all those people. There is such an incredible story behind all this. I am just so happy.”

Massot said the main goal in Milan was to skate a clean short program because “that was missing at the Olympic Games, so it was important for us.”

The French-born athlete explained that, as with the previous season, there was little time to prepare for Worlds. In 2017, Savchenko was recovering from a ligament injury in her right ankle and Massot had aggravated an old back injury.

“This time, after the Olympics, first Aljona was sick, then I was sick. Then we had ‘Art on Ice’ in Switzerland — nine shows with two performances a day, so it was not easy,” Massot explained.

“But it was fun to skate the Olympic programs one last time at Worlds. The audience in Italy was incredible. It was a great end to a great season.”

Massot admitted the road to the top had not always been a smooth ride and that there had been many disagreements along the way.

“It happens when you are working closely together. There are ups and downs and difficult moments, but our coaches were there to tell us to stop and help us find a compromise. It would have been very, very hard without them. There were some difficult moments for us, but also some wonderful moments that erase everything else. We just see one thing now — we are a great team. Together we have realized our dreams and that is the most important thing for me.”

In April, Savchenko and Massot were honored at a public reception hosted by their

home club in Germany, EC Oberstdorf, and the town of Oberstdorf, which was attended by more than 600 people.

A special surprise awaited their coaches Alexander König and Jean-François Ballester. Savchenko and Massot had small replicas of their Olympic gold medals made, which they presented to them at the reception.

“Unfortunately, there are medals only for athletes, so we had small gold medals similar to our Olympic medals made for them,” Savchenko said. The gesture brought tears to the eyes of König and Ballester.

Both skaters then took well-earned vacations with their respective partners. Savchenko and her husband, Liam Cross, spent two weeks in the Dominican Republic.

“I’ve never had a vacation that was two weeks long,” Savchenko said. The couple ensured the hotel had a fitness center, so Cross could prepare for his participation in a German reality show, “Ninja Warriors,” in mid-May, which required contestants to compete on a show-jumping course.

Massot first went home to France to see his family and attend official events. While there, he received an honor from his hometown of Caen. He and his fiancée, Sophie Levaufre, then vacationed in the Maldives.

The big question now is whether Milan was the competitive farewell for Savchenko and Massot. They are keeping their options open, but Savchenko, 34, indicated she would like to continue for one or two more seasons. However, Massot, 29, is inclined to end his competitive career. His back continues to give him serious problems and he needs to constantly exercise to control the pain. Also, he and Levaufre are expecting their first child in October and plan to marry in 2019.

At a press conference in mid-May, Savchenko and Massot announced they will not compete this season, but plan to perform in shows in Asia and Europe and will appear as guest stars on the *Holiday on Ice* tour in Germany throughout the fall and winter.

“We decided to take a break from competing for one year and then we will see. It can happen that we come back, or we don’t,” said Savchenko.

She plans to remain in Oberstdorf, but Massot will be moving to La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, to become a coaching assistant to Ballester.

In an interesting and unexpected turn of events in mid-May, U.S. Figure Skating announced that Savchenko had been appointed the new coach of the U.S. pairs team of Alexa Scimeca Knierim and Chris Knierim. Savchenko has had some coaching experience, as she worked with the young German team of Annika Hocke and Ruben Blommaert.

Savchenko said she was excited to start a new adventure and share her knowledge. The U.S. team first went to Oberstdorf in early May and later in the month Savchenko went to the Knierims’ part-time training base in Chicago to work with them.

“I was already missing the competition feeling because I need a goal,” Savchenko said. “Therefore, I want to pass on my knowledge now.” König and Ballester will also be involved in this project.

“You can learn something from each coach and as a coach I’ll continue to learn all the time. For example, I learned from Mr. König that you don’t always have to be strict as a coach to have success.”

Savchenko, Massot, König, and Ballester are also planning to hold workshops for pairs teams in Berlin and Oberstdorf.

A few weeks after the World Championships, Savchenko and her husband sat down one evening to sort through her medal collection.

Just counting those from the European and World Championships and the Grand Prix events — both junior and senior — Savchenko won 61 medals. She also has 13 medals from national championships and 14 from other international competitions — 88 medals in total with three different partners.

But it has never been about medals for Savchenko. Throughout her long career, she has made a major contribution to the development of pairs skating, first setting new trends with Robin Szolkowy and continuing that development with Massot.

Their free skate last season, which was created with ice dance legend Christopher Dean, blended the artistic with the technical in a way no other pairs program had done before.

“Bruno is a great man and I am grateful for this beautiful time, four wonderful years to fulfill my dream and his dream,” Savchenko said of her partner.

Massot kept it simple when asked what Savchenko means to him: “Just one word — she is a champion.” **IFS**



KAETLYN OSMOND

A DREAM SEASON



BY ROBERT BRODIE

As a young girl from a small town in Canada's easternmost province, Kaetlyn Osmond dreamed of being in the spotlight and performing in ice shows. Being the centre of attention was what it was all about for her, but she knew the only way to achieve that goal was to make a name for herself in the competitive world.

With three Olympic medals — one of each color — from two Winter Games and a World crown to her credit, the girl from Marystown exceeded all her childhood dreams.

Kaetlyn Osmond became the centre of attention in ladies' figure skating, in more ways than she ever imagined last season.

That attention continued with her post-season performances in shows around the world, most recently in Japan, South Korea and a cross-Canada tour — all in a dizzying stretch of six weeks through April and May.

Every night, Osmond heard the words “World champion” as she was introduced. But even that was not enough to fully cement the reality of what happened on a March evening in Milan, Italy, when she became the first Canadian to earn that distinction since Karen Magnussen in 1973.

“I always dreamed of going to shows and being part of shows and I knew I had to compete and make a name for myself to get the good spots in them,” said Osmond who can laugh now when she is reminded about how and why it all began.

“It’s definitely still hard to believe I’ve been able to get this much out of my career already, just because I wanted to be the centre of attention.”

The World title came a mere three weeks after the 22-year-old claimed the bronze medal at the Olympic Winter Games. Osmond remembers thinking to herself as she watched Joannie Rochette achieve that feat in Vancouver in 2010, “that’s cool, but I’m never going to be able to do that.”

Behind her natural humility, however, is the confident voice of a young woman whose belief in herself and her ability as a skater has taken her to heights she felt for too long were elusive and unreachable.

Even though she claimed silver at the 2017 World Championships, it was not until she medaled in PyeongChang that Osmond felt she truly belonged in the same league as skaters such as Alina Zagitova and Evgenia Medvedeva.

“Last year, I caught a little shimmer of it, especially at Worlds when I came second. It hit me then that I can make the podium, that I can be one of the best if I keep going this way,” said Osmond, who, for the first time, medaled at every event she contested last season.

“This year, in competition, I started to feel like I deserved it, and realized that I’m not just hitting the podium because I skated well and the rest of the field didn’t. I was hitting the podium because I was

skating well, fighting against even harder programs and against great skaters. I also saw that my score was getting closer and closer to the two Russians that beat me at the Olympic Games. That meant a lot to me.”

Even a little blip at the Canadian Championships in January, where she finished second behind Gabrielle Daleman, did not diminish her confidence.

Rather, Osmond followed the path of one of her choreographers, Jeffrey Buttle, who placed second behind Patrick Chan at 2008 nationals and went on to win Worlds two months later. Osmond attended those nationals where her older sister, Natasha, competed in junior ladies. Osmond stayed to watch that men’s event.

“I have never doubted that Kaetlyn was capable of performing at her best when it mattered the most.”

—Ravi Walia

It’s a story she was reminded about at nationals this year by Tessa Virtue, Scott Moir and Eric Radford. “Each person kept reminding me that Jeff came second that year and he won Worlds,” said Osmond. “I kind of laughed and said, ‘well, I’m not going to win Worlds.’”

In an ironic twist, it was Buttle who choreographed the “Black Swan” long program that took her to both the Olympic and World podiums last season.

The intricate routine, with seven triple jumps, was one the naysayers suggested Osmond would not be able to skate cleanly in competition. That proved to be the extra fuel she needed to push her to the two biggest free skate scores of her career. “I got 142 at Worlds last year and my mark just seemed to not want to go above it until Olympics this year,” she said of her long program score in Korea (152.15).

“Going into the Olympics, I heard so many people say that my long program is not consistent enough, and I was like, ‘no,

it is.’ I knew I could do it. I was terrified the entire day of the long program that I couldn’t speak. I was shaking, which was a different sensation for me. I do get nervous, but not that bad.

“When my name got called and I got into my starting position, I thought ‘why am I nervous? This program, I can do it.’ And that’s exactly how I felt the entire time. I felt like I was doing my job, one thing at a time. I was so focused and in the moment.”

Ravi Walia, who has coached Osmond since she moved to Edmonton, Alberta, with her family as a 10-year-old, was not surprised that his prized protégé was able to rise to the biggest moment of her skating life. It is something he has come to expect of a skater for whom mental strength has become a huge asset.

“I have never doubted that Kaetlyn was capable of performing at her best when it mattered the most,” he said. “I’ve coached her for 12 years and she is a very fierce competitor.”

“She showed that at the Olympic Games, under a lot of pressure in that free program, skating in the last group. I know she was very nervous, but she really is so mentally strong, and it showed right there in that moment. It was definitely a dream year.”

GLOBAL GLORY

An even bigger test lay ahead after Osmond returned home from PyeongChang on the ultimate high. Not only did she have a medal to call her own, she had kicked off her Olympic experience as a member of Canada’s gold medal winning crew in the Team Event.

“We’ve become so close over the last couple of years. They treated me amazingly and helped me grow up in this sport,” Osmond said of her teammates. “Being on the podium with them and seeing their faces and their happiness gave me so much joy.”

Back home, that energy soon evaporated, but there was still the matter of preparing to peak again a month later at the World Championships. “That was probably the toughest thing I’ve ever done in my life,” said Osmond. “Coming home from Olympics ... I had just given three weeks of energy and so many different emotions, and I just felt drained. Mentally, physically ... I just couldn’t imagine that I’d have to get myself together to compete again in a matter of weeks.



“ This entire year has been a whirlwind. ”

—Kaetlyn Osmond

injured her ankle, but kept pushing forward. When her short program score left her in fourth place, more than seven points behind the leader heading into the free skate, it seemed it was now about finding her way back to the World podium.

But as it turned out, Osmond had much more waiting for her.

Skating first in the final group in the free, the three-time Canadian champion nearly matched her performance in PyeongChang, posting a 150.50 score for a program that she had to battle through to the finish.

“At the Olympics, after my long program, I was buzzing with energy and felt like I could do another four programs afterwards.

“But at Worlds, when I hit my ending, I felt so relieved. I remember that halfway through my program, I was questioning how I was going to do it, but I had reached the point of exhaustion and my brain just shut off. I was like, ‘you know what, no. You’ve trained the entire year, you’re going to finish this program.’ I was really glad in those moments that I was trained, and I could do everything on autopilot.

“I remember getting off the ice, giving Ravi a hug and saying, ‘I did it.’ I almost felt more proud after that long program

than I did at the Olympics.”

But, the drama in Milan was far from over. Osmond had to watch five other competitors before knowing whether she would claim a second straight World medal. One by one, they failed to surpass her score. Eventually, it came down to Carolina Kostner, the final skater.

“I honestly didn’t think I was going to be able to do it.

“I showed up at the rink for the first day of training after the Olympics, and I cried. I was so tired I couldn’t even tie my own skates. Ravi would tell me to do something, and I would just cry. I would do it because I had to, but it always amazed me that I was still going to compete.

“What really motivated me for Worlds, was that I didn’t want my performance in PyeongChang to be ‘a fluke,’” she said. “I wanted it to be, ‘no that wasn’t a mistake, I didn’t just do a clean long program because it was the Olympics.’ I went to Worlds to prove again that I could do this long program.”

During her first practice in Milan, she



“ I never thought I would be a person people would look up to. ”

—Kaetlyn Osmond

“Watching Carolina skate, I thought, how amazing would it be to win Worlds again in your country,” said Osmond, who was a first-year senior when Kostner won Worlds in 2012. “Then I saw her fall and I just looked at Ravi and he said, ‘don’t get your hopes up.’ I said OK. Then there was another mistake and he said, ‘you know what, just plan for the worst.’ And I was like, ‘the worst is second. I can’t really plan for the worst.’”

“I remember hearing Ravi say that ‘her technical is too low.’ I just looked at him and I didn’t believe what he was saying until her scores came up.”

What happened in the next few minutes remains a blur to Osmond: Kostner’s scores being below hers (she finished fourth), then all the skaters surrounding her in the green room applauding the new World champion.

“When we saw the scores, I covered my face with my hands and looked around and everyone was clapping and looking at me,” Osmond said. “I was sitting there saying, ‘I don’t know what’s going on.’”

As Osmond and the other two medalists, Japan’s Wakaba Higuchi (silver) and Satoko Miyahara (bronze), began their victory lap around the ice following the medal ceremony, Osmond stumbled on a carpet and tumbled to the ice.

“My nickname growing up was Bambi. I was continually tripping on things, so I didn’t even question it when I hit the ice,” she said. “I was laughing so hard. Everyone who knows me or watched me grow up mentioned to me afterward that I needed to be able to do that, and I completely agree.”

“I don’t even remember tripping. When I picked my feet up I saw the carpet was underneath them and I just sat there and thought, ‘you’ve *got* to be kidding me.’ But you know what, me winning Worlds wouldn’t have felt real if I didn’t have a moment like that.”

Osmond became only the fourth Canadian lady ever to win a World title, joining Barbara Ann Scott (1947 and 1948), Petra Burka (1965) and Magnussen.

“It definitely hasn’t sunk in yet. After Worlds, Karen sent me an amazing email. She told me to wait five months before it will actually set in and then I’ll realize what happened,” Osmond said.

“But I don’t know that it ever will

at this point. This entire year has been a whirlwind.”

INSPIRED MOMENTS

To fully appreciate the heights Osmond has now reached, one needs to go back to her lowest point — a day in September 2014 when she suffered a freak fall at a practice session and broke her fibula in two places.

It was just one of a string of injuries, which left her sitting on the ice saying, ‘why does this keep happening to me?’ After her surgery, Osmond knew exactly how to put a stop to it all. While lying in her hospital bed, she looked at her mother and said, “I’m not skating again. I don’t want to.”

When Walia heard those sentiments, he considered everything Osmond had accomplished to that point and was initially prepared to let her have her way.

“When I realized that it looked like she wasn’t going to come back to skating, it made me think a lot about the situation,” he said. “I considered just letting her finish. I told myself, she’s been a two-time national champion, top 10 in the world, and she’s been to the Olympic Games. That’s a really great career. I thought maybe this it.”

But Walia realized it could not end there, and that letting Osmond hang up her skates would be a terrible waste of talent and potential.

Of course, there was no telling Osmond that at the time — she was broken in ways that went far beyond the two shattered bones in her leg. Instead, Walia and Osmond’s parents appealed to the very thing that first brought her to the ice all those years ago.

“When my parents pushed me to get back on the ice, it wasn’t to compete again,” said Osmond, who was 18 at the time. “They just didn’t want me to be scared of being on the ice and being in my skates.”

She freely admits she has no idea what she would be doing today if she had quit skating, though she suspects she probably would be back in school.

But what Osmond does know, is hitting her lowest point was the springboard for everything that has followed.

“I’m fully convinced that everything I’ve done since then wouldn’t have happened. I needed that break, I needed that rock bottom feeling of not wanting to skate to actually remind myself about why I do it,” she said.

“Ravi took the time back then to fix my technique and get my jumps feeling

a lot better. I needed the mental switch of reminding myself why I was skating. It took me two years and a lot of crying to see the good in it.”

After finishing third at 2016 nationals and not making the World team Osmond asked herself, ‘why am I training every single day and going to competitions, when I’m not able to do it and I’m not making teams? I didn’t fight back from the injury and fight back from the pain it caused to try to get back from that for nothing.’

“Finally, it hit me in that moment — if I’m going to keep doing this, I’m going to do my best and just that little mental switch caused me to put so much more into the sport and get myself in the best shape I’ve ever been in — and get myself the help I needed off the ice.”

Walia had a list of about 15 things he felt Osmond needed to change to make major improvements, and one by one they checked them off. That included getting Osmond to work with a sports psychologist, which Walia said helped her tremendously.

When the 2016–2017 season opened, they rolled out a new and improved version of Osmond and the results followed. She won medals at both her Grand Prix events and qualified for the Final for the first time, where she finished fourth. Osmond regained her Canadian title in Ottawa, and went on to a silver-medal finish at 2017 Worlds.

The roll continued into the 2017–2018 campaign, with a victory at Skate Canada and a bronze-medal finish at the Grand Prix Final, followed by the results at Olympics and Worlds. The entire process taught Osmond so much about herself.

“I’ve learned I’m a lot stronger than I thought I was, and that I’m capable of a lot more things than I ever believed I would be,” she said. “I learned I had to set my mind to it and just say ‘I have the ability to be the best in the world.’ I had always put the effort in, but I never believed it.”

Those are the lessons she took with her to Newfoundland last April, when the province welcomed Osmond with a reception worthy of a World champion. There were dozens of people waiting to greet her at St. John’s airport when she landed, and three arenas in various parts of the province were filled for ice shows she performed in. One of those, of course, was in her hometown of Marystown, where the local rink was renamed the Kaetlyn Osmond Arena four years ago.

“It was just so incredible. It was so humbling going home, and such an honor,” said Osmond. “It really felt like a huge celebration. My earliest memories of skating and growing up are in that rink. When I went back this time, there were a number of people there I used to skate with and I talked with them. We were just amazed at everything that has happened since then.”

There is now a stretch of highway leading into town called Osmond Way, the latest honor bestowed upon the town’s favorite daughter.

COMING UP FOR AIR

As for what happens next ... Osmond is uncertain about her future plans. Though she said she still wants to compete and is not yet ready to hang up her skates, she announced in early June, that she would not be competing in the fall.

In a statement issued by Skate Canada, Osmond said she needed time to refocus and evaluate the next steps and wants to explore other opportunities during this time.

One of those opportunities will be a nationwide tour that opens in British Columbia in early October and runs through the end of November, with the final stop being in St. John’s.

Osmond is not closing the door on competing in the second half of the season, and said that it is still a possibility.

While she is aware her new status as World champion has made her an idol in the eyes of young girls across Canada, she has a hard time seeing herself in that light. “I never thought I’d be a person people would look up to,” Osmond said.

But hers is a story that carries a vital message of hope and perseverance, and she is always eager to share it.

“I can now go to others and tell them that it doesn’t matter where you’re from. You can be from a small town or city or fight injuries or just be a natural klutz — I am, Worlds proved it — but if you fight for it and push for it, you’ll find something rewarding comes out of it.”

“Maybe it won’t bring you a World title because there are only so many people in the world that can achieve that, but it can bring a sense of passion and a drive, and take you somewhere you never expected.

“It’s always worth it. There’s always something good that is going to come out of it.” **IFS**



AROUND THE GLOBE



OPPOSITE PAGE:

- Yuna Kim returned to the ice for the first time in four years for the “All That Skate” shows, choreographed and directed by David Wilson.

Photo: Courtesy David Wilson

- Mikhail Kolyada and Stanislava Konstantinova enjoyed some down time at their training base, the Figure Skating Academy in St. Petersburg.

Photo: Tatjana Flade

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE:

- Mirai Nagasu congratulated Adam Rippon on his “Dancing with the Stars: Athletes Edition” victory.

Photo: Courtesy Kelly Rippon

- Alexei Mishin with two of his star pupils, Elizaveta Tuktamysheva (left) and Sofia Samodurova.

Photo: Tatjana Flade

- Alina Zagitova stopped by the offices of the Russian Federation to collect her fan mail, which included a trophy sent to her by a German fan.

Photo: Tatjana Flade



INNER
Loop



OPPOSITE PAGE:

- Madison Chock and Evan Bates remained in Italy following the 2018 World Championships. The ice dance duo visited a number of cities including Florence.

Photo: Flavio Valle

- Mirai Nagasu and her partner, Alan Bersten, performed a Foxtrot to "It's a Small World" on "Dancing with the Stars: Athletes Edition." The duo was eliminated in Week 3 of the competition.

Photo: Courtesy Rogers Media/CityTV

THIS PAGE:

- Aljona Savchenko thanked her coach Alexander König for his dedication and commitment over the past four years. König left Oberstdorf, Germany, shortly after Worlds and moved to Berlin where he now operates his own skating school.

Photo: Tatjana Flade



OLYMPIC INDUCTIONS

The 2018 World Figure Skating Hall of Fame inductees were announced on April 17. This year's honorees hail from around the world, with one Canadian and one American included in the esteemed group.

BY SUSAN D. RUSSELL



SHIZUKA ARAKAWA

Shizuka Arakawa was one of the trailblazers for ladies figure skating in Japan. Born in Tokyo in December 1981, she was named after Shizuka Gozen, a famous Japanese court dancer from the 12th century.

Arakawa grew up in Sendai and began skating at age 5. She won the first of three consecutive national junior titles in 1995 and claimed two senior titles in 1998 and 1999. At age 16, she made her Olympic debut on home soil, placing 13th at the 1998 Winter Games in Nagano.

Four years later, a second-place finish at 2002 Japanese nationals left her off the Olympic team.

Despite winning two silver medals and a bronze on the 2003 Grand Prix circuit and finishing third at the Grand Prix Final, Arakawa planned to retire following the 2004 World Championships.

However, her victory at those Championships in Dortmund, Germany — the first for her nation since Yuka Sato achieved the feat a decade earlier — made her rethink that decision.

Arakawa finished ninth at Worlds the following season, which prompted the then 23-year-old to make some major changes, one of which was to move to the U.S. to train with Nikolai Morozov.

In 2006, Arakawa made history for her nation when she claimed the Olympic figure skating title in Torino, Italy — the first and, to this day, only Japanese lady to ever mine Olympic gold.

At age 24, she was the second oldest Olympic ladies champion in history. Great Britain's Madge Syers won the title at the 1908 Olympic Summer Games — where figure skating made its debut — more than 80 years earlier at age 27.

Arakawa returned home a national hero — not only recognized for her Olympic victory but also because she won Japan's only medal at the 2006 Winter Games.

She retired a few weeks later and skated on the professional circuit for a number of years before developing a career in television commentary.

Married on her 32nd birthday in Dec. 2013, Arakawa and her husband welcomed a daughter, Mai, in November 2014, and a son in May 2018.



International Skating Union announced it had opened the door to retired skaters to compete at the 1994 Olympic Winter Games, Petrenko resumed training. However, his performances in Lillehammer, Norway, fell far below his expectations and he finished fourth.

Shortly after those Games, Petrenko moved to the U.S. and turned to coaching. He subsequently became an ISU technical specialist for Ukraine.

Petrenko spent a record 20 seasons performing on Tom Collins *Champions on Ice* tour.

In 1992, he married his coach's eldest daughter, Nina. The couple have a daughter, Victoria, 21.

ELENA VALOVA/OLEG VASILIEV

Elena Valova and Oleg Vasiliev both began their careers as singles skaters. At age 15, Valova was paired with Vasiliev, then 18, and the duo began training with Tamara Moskvina.

In their first season on the international circuit (1981-1982), Valova and Vasiliev claimed the pairs title at Nebelhorn Trophy and placed third at Skate America.

The team from Leningrad (St. Petersburg) had a major breakthrough the following season, finishing second at the 1983 European Championships and claiming the World title in their debut a few weeks later.

But it was during the 1983-1984 season that Valova and Vasiliev captured the world's attention. After winning Skate America, and the 1984 European title, the duo claimed the biggest prize of all — the Olympic crown. Their victory in

VIKTOR PETRENKO

Born in Odessa, Ukraine, a satellite state of the former Soviet Union, Viktor Petrenko began skating at age 5. Four years later, Galina Zmievskaia recognized his talent and began coaching him — an arrangement that would last his entire career.

Petrenko competed under three different banners. As a representative of the Soviet Union, Petrenko won the World Junior title in 1984, and four years later captured the bronze medal at the 1998 Olympic Winter Games behind Brian Boitano and Brian Orser.

He claimed the 1990 and 1991 European titles for the Soviet Union, but placed second both years behind Kurt Browning at the World Championships. After losing the 1992 European title to Petr Barna of Czechoslovakia, Petrenko was not considered a frontrunner to claim the 1992 Olympic title.

Those Winter Games took place amid the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and athletes from six of the former satellite states competed in Albertville under the Unified Team flag. However, at the opening ceremony, all six nations were independently represented and Petrenko had the honor of being the first flag bearer for Ukraine at an Olympic Winter Games.

Though he did not have his best performances in France, he was awarded first place marks by seven of the nine judges and claimed the gold medal. To this day, Petrenko holds a special place in his nation's history as the only person from Ukraine to have ever won an Olympic figure skating title.

A month later, after claiming his only World crown, he retired and transitioned onto the professional stage. When the



PHOTO: COURTESY RUSSIAN FIGURE SKATING FEDERATION ARCHIVES

Sarajevo continued the Soviet Union's dominance in pairs, which dated back to 1964. However, their winning streak came to an end a few weeks later when they placed second at the World Championships behind Canada's Barbara Underhill and Paul Martini.

Valova and Vasiliev would go on to claim two more European crowns (1985-1986), and two World titles (1985 and 1988).

Four years after mining Olympic gold, the Soviet duo were outskated by their compatriots, Ekaterina Gordeeva and Sergei Grinkov, at the 1988 Olympic Winter Games, finishing in second place. After capturing the World title a few weeks later, Valova and Vasiliev retired.

It marked the end to a remarkable career that saw the duo stand on the podium at every international event they contested.

Valova and Vasiliev married in 1984 and performed in an ice theatre production in the Soviet Union for a year. They subsequently signed a contract with Tom Collins *Tour of World Figure Skating Champions* (later *Champions on Ice*), becoming the first Soviets to do so without losing their citizenship. Valova and Vasiliev divorced in 1992.

Valova remarried and turned to coaching. She has one son, Roman, who was born in 1996. The following year she moved to the U.S. and settled in Pittsburgh. She is a coach at the Robert Morris University Island Sports Center.

Vasiliev moved to the U. S. and accepted a coaching position in Chicago, where he remained for many years. In 2001, at the urging of his former coach, Vasiliev agreed to work with a Russian pairs team, Tatiana Totmianina and Maxim Marinin, who he would subsequently guide to five European and two World titles, and the 2006 Olympic crown.

Vasiliev returned to Russia and married his current wife in 2013. Their daughter, Varvara, was born a year later. Vasiliev also has a daughter from a second marriage — Katia, who was born in 1994.

IRINA MOISEEVA/ ANDREI MINENKOV

Irina Moiseeva and Andrei Minenkov first met at an ice rink in the Soviet Union as young children. In 1967, at ages 12 and 13, respectively, their first coach, Igor Kabanov, paired them as an ice dance team.

Two years later, legendary coach Tatiana Tarasova took over the coaching duties. Under her guidance, Moiseeva and Minenkov made their international debut in 1973 finishing seventh at both the European and World Championships.

At the 1975 Soviet Championships, Moiseeva and Minenkov, affectionately known as Min and Mo, placed third behind Lyudmila Pakhomova and Aleksandr Gorshkov and Natalia Linichuk and Gennadi Karponosov.

In the absence of Pakhomova and Gorshkov at Worlds that year, Moiseeva and Minenkov captured the first of two global titles (the second in 1977), while their rivals, Linichuk and Karponosov, placed fourth.

The following season saw a string of second-place finishes for the ice dance duo: silver at the 1976 European Championships, the Olympic Winter Games (where ice dance made its Olympic debut), and the World Championships.

However, the 1976–1977 season proved to be a golden one for



Moiseeva and Minenkov, who captured the national, European, and World crowns. It would be the most successful season of their career.

Married in 1977, the couple retired in November 1983 when they learned Moiseeva was pregnant. They left the ice dance world with seven consecutive European and eight World medals, and Olympic bronze in 1980.

Great Britain's Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean considered them one of their greatest influences, but during their career, Moiseeva and Minenkov were often accused of "breaking the rules."

In 1985, Tarasova, who was then the coach of Natalya Bestemianova and Andrei Bukin, claimed that Torvill and Dean had performed illegal moves in their "Bolero" routine. Their coach, Betty Callaway, replied that she was delighted that the Russians had finally found a rulebook.

Moiseeva and Minenkov coached in the U.S. for a few years before returning to their hometown of Moscow.

EMMERICH DANZER

Following in the footsteps of some of the greatest champions in skating history, Emmerich Danzer was the last in a long line of Austrian stars. Born March 15, 1944, Danzer took up skating at age 5 in his hometown of Vienna. In 1953, he began training with Herta Wächter who, along with Karl Schäfer, founded the famous

“Karl Schäfer Ice Revue.”

Danzer had the rare combination of strong compulsory figures and was an excellent free style skater.

He placed seventh at his 1962 World Championships debut and two years later finished fifth at the 1964 Olympic Winter Games.

Danzer claimed the first of three World titles in 1966, which made him a hero in his homeland.

It had been 28 years since fellow Austrian Felix Kaspar had captured his second consecutive and final World title in 1938.

A four-time national champion, Danzer won four consecutive European titles (1965-1968), and two further consecutive World titles in 1967 and 1968. He was twice named Austria’s national athlete of the year (1966 and 1967).

Heading into the 1968 Olympic Winter Games, Danzer was considered the favorite for gold.

But, at the worst possible time, one of his strongest assets — compulsory figures — let him down. During the execution of one of the figures he came to an almost complete stop.

Danzer was unable to recover despite a strong free skate and finished fourth. Though the audience disagreed with the result, the charismatic skater said he had no issue with the results of the competition.

He turned professional following the Olympic Games and performed with the *Vienna Ice Revue* and *Holiday on Ice* tours for seven years.

Danzer retired from skating in 1975 and moved to the U.S., where he coached for 12 years, subsequently returning to Austria.

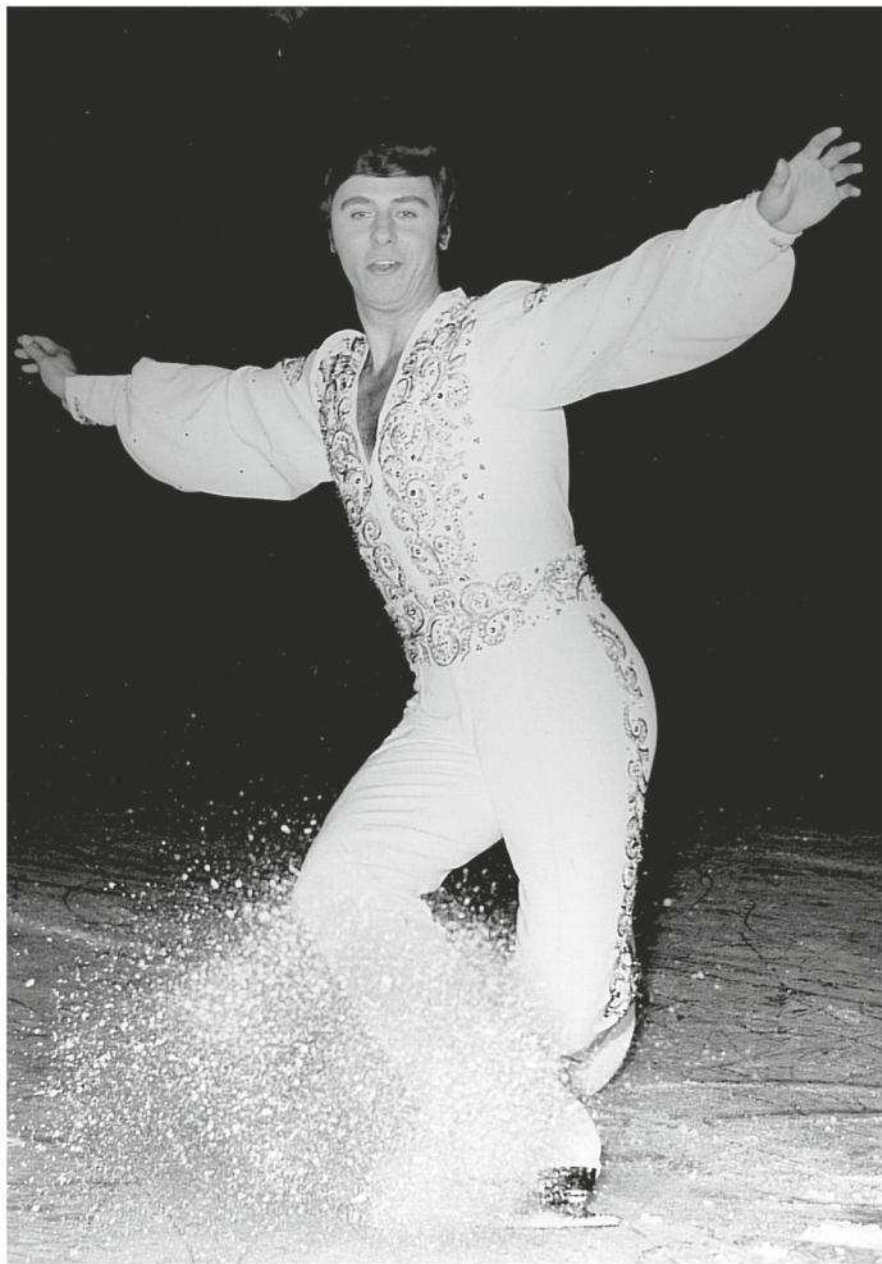


PHOTO: COURTESY DR. ROMAN SEELIGER

DR. RICHARD PORTER



Universally acknowledged as the father of synchronized skating, Richard Porter founded the first precision team in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1954.

His team, the Hockettes, comprised 16 ladies who performed routines between periods at University of Michigan hockey games.

Interest in the sport began to grow in the 1970s, and with each season, there were more teams developing creative and innovative routines that incorporated better basic skating skills and more sophisticated transitions.

The first official international synchronized skating competition was held in Michigan in March 1976 between teams

from Canada and the U.S.

The Ann Arbor Figure Skating Club still holds an annual competition, the Dr. Richard Porter Synchronized Skating Classic, every December.

Porter passed away in 1997, three years before the first World Synchronized Skating Championships in 2000.

Two other notable influences on the 2018 list of inductees are Bin Yao, who directed China’s pairs program for 30 years and coached three teams to World and Olympic glory at the same time (profiled in the October 2017 issue of *International Figure Skating*); and award-winning Canadian choreographer Sandra Bezic (profiled in this issue).

PHOTO: COURTESY ANN ARBOR FSC

EVOLVING ICE DANCE HOT SPOTS

BY SUSAN D. RUSSELL



Igor Shpilband

Ice dance hubs are fluctuating phenomena in skating circles. Rinks that were once regarded as the “ice dance halls of the world” rise and fall, and new ones emerge that continue the cycle.

That circumstance is no more evident than it is in 2018.

For many years the Detroit, Novi and Canton schools in Michigan were the place to go for those who wanted to reach the top of the ice dance ladder, but today it seems those locales are no longer on any elite ice dancer’s radar.

In the few short months since the Olympic Winter Games closing ceremony, a number of skaters have left their long-established training bases in search of new and perhaps better options.

Likewise, a couple of coaches who also obviously believed the end of an era had arrived in their current situations have moved on.

Former World junior champion Greg Zuerlein, who had coached at the Novi Ice Arena alongside his former coach Igor Shpilband for a number of years, left Michigan in May and moved to Maryland.

He is now coaching at the Wheaton Ice Dance Academy, the

venue that produced two U.S. teams that won consecutive World Junior ice dance titles (2016-2017), and houses a stable of rising ice dance talent.

Former French ice dance champion Fabian Bourzat, who also coached alongside Shpilband the past four years, has returned to France.

Two of the teams Shpilband had coached split after the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

Angélique Abachkina and Louis Thauron of France both went in search of new partners, as did Elliana Pogrebinsky of the U.S. after her partner Alex Benoit decided his preference lay in an acting career rather than skating.

Penny Coomes and Nicholas Buckland of Great Britain, also coached by Shpilband, finished in a disappointing 11th place in PyeongChang and did not compete at the subsequent World Championships.

They have not yet announced their future plans, but the duo returned home after the Games and in early June, a time when most skaters are getting new programs and setting a plan for the upcoming season, they were still in England.

Down the highway in Michigan, the Detroit Skating Club also lost a valuable asset when Angelika Krylova returned to her Russian homeland after a 12-year coaching stint with her husband and coaching associate, Pasquale Camerlengo.



Pasquale Camerlengo



Marina Zoueva

No known coaching changes have so far taken place at the Arctic Figure Skating Club in Canton, where Marina Zoueva is based.

However, with her top team, Maia Shibutani and Alex Shibutani, opting to take a break from competing next season, Zoueva has only (at the elite level) the Japanese ice dance champions currently under her wing. The German team of Kavita Lorenz and Joti Polizoakis, who were coached by Zoueva, ended their partnership in May.



Romain Haguenaer

Japan's Misato Komatsubara and Tim Koleto, a husband and wife duo that was previously coached by Barbara Fusar-Poli, Stefano Caruso and Rie Arikawa in Italy, announced in March they were moving to Montréal to train with Marie-France Dubreuil, Patrice Lauzon and Romain Haguenaer.

Kaitlin Hawayek and Jean-Luc Baker were the first U.S. ice dancers to confirm a coaching change. On April 20, U.S. Figure Skating issued a press release stating the team was leaving Detroit and Camerlengo, who had coached them their entire career, and moving to Montréal.

In late May — though the decision had been made much earlier — Madison Chock and Evan Bates, who had been coached by Shpilband and his team since 2011, announced they were leaving their Novi training base and Montréal would be their new home.

It is understandable why so many successful, up-and-coming teams or those on the edge of glory want to train at the Montréal International School of Skating with Dubreuil, Lauzon, Haguenaer and their team.

In just a few short years, the school has become the go-to ice dance hub. It has earned a reputation for excellent training conditions, a competitive yet friendly environment, and an underlying premise that every person who trains there must be a team player.



**Marie-France Dubreuil
and Patrice Lauzon**

Not to mention Dubreuil, Lauzon and Haguenaer coached two teams to gold and silver at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games (Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, and Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron) and repeated the result a month later at the World Championships, where Papadakis and Cizeron took the gold and Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue, fourth at the Games, claimed the silver medal.

Success breeds success and the Montréal trio certainly enjoyed their share of that last season, closing out the year with those three teams ranking top three in the World Standings.

Aside from the teams noted above and those who are making the move to Montréal, the coaching trio also have a quad of international ice dance duos training with them: Spain's Olivia Smart and Adrià Díaz; Marie-Jade Lauriault and Romain Le Gac of France; Canada's Carolane Soucisse and Shane Firus; and Laurence Fournier Beaudry and Nikolaj Sørensen, who formerly competed for Denmark, but will now represent Canada.

Those four teams all placed in the top 24 in the Season's World Ranking for the ice dance discipline.

THE JUNIOR CONNECTION

Ted Barton is the executive director of the British Columbia/Yukon section of Skate Canada, but to millions of people around the world he is the guru of the International Skating Union (ISU) Junior Grand Prix Series and the Junior Grand Prix Final.

Known and respected for his insightful and balanced commentary of each and every skater, Barton has been covering the juniors the past four years. During that time, he has witnessed firsthand the growth and evolution of hundreds of young skaters — some of whom have gone on to become international skating stars.

How did the idea to broadcast the junior events come about?

It began when I was thinking about how best to develop young kids in rural areas in Canada. A 7-year-old kid in Vancouver is not the same as a 7-year-old kid in Terrace (a town located 840 miles — 1,350 kilometers — north of Vancouver), so how could we get them to see each other skate? Around 2010 or 2011 our organization bought a tri-caster and started streaming local competitions so, say, a young girl in a rural area was able to see a girl the same age skating in Vancouver ... our hope was that she would say, 'If she can do it, I can too.' It was all about development.

How did you present the concept to the ISU and what was the initial reaction to the idea?

We had an overwhelming response to the Canadian project, so I took the idea to Peter Crick, who was the sports director at the ISU at the time. I had worked with Peter for many years on the judging system and we always shared ideas and craziness. I told him about my experience and what we learned from the streaming experience in British Columbia. I said, 'you have the Junior Grand Prix property and no one wants that. It is kind of obscure, but some of the young kids from around the world are pretty good. Why don't we tell their story?'

Peter thought it was a great idea and took it to the ISU Council. It took about a year or two to get organized. We had a meeting at Skate America in Chicago and Japan's Asahi TV was there. The people from Asahi had also told Peter they were interested in the Junior Grand Prix. They knew Mao Asada, who had not then ended her career, would at a certain point and they wanted their television audiences to get to know the next generation and get them engaged in their stories.

The ISU Council agreed to give it a try in 2014. So, we all went to Courchevel, France, for the first event that season. Though we



were concerned about small towns in the mountains not having any Internet connectivity, it all worked out. At that very first competition Evgenia Medvedeva won and we were like, 'she is amazing.'

As we went along, we discovered all the kids had interesting stories and many were incredibly gifted, and this gave us a way to follow their growth not only as skaters, but also as people. As we went on we got better at what we were doing, and explored and found better ways to tell the stories. That was very important for us.

The kids were all good in their own way, but the difference between skaters from Cyprus or Argentina and Russia or Canada was so wide — the challenge was to tell all the stories with respect. We found a good way to do that and we were pleasantly surprised at the response we received. We also started to see the gap between the juniors and seniors closing.

What factors played a part in the growth of the viewership of this Series?

Well, the first year we had 1.4 million views; the second year was 4.8 million, and the third was around 10 million. I think we are now averaging around one million viewers per competition.

The speed with which we arrived at where we are now with viewership surprised us all. The main skating nations like Canada, the U.S., Russia, and Japan latched on to this pretty early because those countries have a lot of skaters competing at Junior Grand Prix events and they wanted to follow them. So, we had a sort of built-in audience to start with because those people were already engaged in skating.

Then there were countries like Chile, Argentina, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia that have skating communities, but some have no rinks. When expatriates or people who were connected with skating started watching, their colleagues, some who had never seen skating before, also started watching. We tracked the statistics of those non-skating countries and the growth every year has been outstanding.

So, we were growing in the skating nations, but more importantly we were growing around the world, and the sport was getting exposure in places where people did not even know it existed.

Sometimes during a broadcast I will ask people to let us know where they are from, and the responses come in like a machine gun. People from Malaysia, Turkey, Greenland, Azerbaijan — all over the world. To actually see that happening live on the site is very cool.

We knew we had to have a long-term vision, to be patient and build things slowly. That is one of the reasons that this initiative took off and I think we are seeing results now. We wanted the sport to grow and today we are seeing many new countries joining the ISU.

Also, the ISU is really good at getting information out about the Junior Grand Prix events with timetables of when each skater will compete, so if people want to watch a particular skater they know exactly what time that person will skate no matter whether they are in Russia or Buenos Aires. We have found that our audience has also grown because of that.

How do you think the broadcast benefits junior skaters?

I believe having them introduced to the media early helps prepare them better for the senior ranks, so when they break into the seniors — although the media can be overwhelming — it will not be so intimidating. I think that is one very good aspect.

When I first started doing this, I went with my heart and, in telling the stories of the juniors, people began looking at them differently. I remember when I skated I was pathetic to a certain degree. I was not particularly highly skilled, but I loved the individuality of the sport and I remembered how hard and how difficult skating is. Then I had a couple of coaches who turned the switch on in my head.

So, when I watch these kids I am hopefully offering encouragement, inspiration and that there is always hope, no matter how hard it seems. If I could do it — and I was a big ox, like a bull in a china shop — then they can do it. When I see kids from countries that don't have the skills, but they are out there trying — like Princess Alexandra from Monaco, who was a beautiful girl and though she was not highly skilled, she loved skating — I get it.

You do not talk during a performance, but recap the program after it is finished. Why did you take this approach?

When I am watching skating and someone is talking about something that is irrelevant and not connected to the program I am watching I am like, 'What are they talking about?' It is so annoying.

There is a way to cover skating — it is important to tell the stories without being negative or critical. You do have to be honest. A bad skate is a bad skate. Call it a tough skate or whatever you want to



Evgenia Medvedeva dominated the Junior Grand Prix circuit in 2014. The following season she claimed the senior World title.

call it — but you don't have to be mean. I try to choose the right words and I think that resonates with people.

I have a huge responsibility to be honest and encouraging. The kids get off the ice and they go and watch their video immediately. They hear what I had to say, so I feel a responsibility to support what their coaches are teaching them, the parents who are supporting them and the money being invested in them.

Skaters are not naïve. They know if they had a good skate or not and if they hear from us what their coaches are telling them — 'don't give up, here are some little things to improve' — then there is something for them to build on.

Would you say the level of skating has improved the past few seasons? If so, how?

Yes, just unbelievable how much the level has risen in the past few seasons. Some of the young ladies are so efficient technically. People say they are going to hurt their bodies but no, their technique is so good it has very low impact on their bodies. If your technique is bad, then yes, you are going to get injured.

But if your technique is good then you are going to be fine. As they grow their technique is going to get a little wobbly, but technique is technique and it is so well taught by some of these coaches today that these kids will keep it through puberty. We have already seen many of them move into seniors and be very successful.

Why do you think there has been so much improvement?

I would attribute the development of the junior skaters to the judging system, the concept of which was to hand control back to the skater. No one can say skating has not gotten better because the kids are now very strong technically and they are also very creative as well. One of the best decisions I think the ISU ever made was allowing vocals. It is much more entertaining and has really helped the sport grow.

What do you think needs to change to bring skating to a wider audience?

Skating needs to be more open to the world — the junior coverage is just one little door, but many more need to be opened. My hope going forward is that the sport will open up to the world for everyone to see. That currently does not exist except for the juniors.

I would like to see other nations open up their competitions to the world — I would love to be able to watch Japanese or Russian nationals, and other competitions that are currently not available outside of their respective nations. I am hoping that will change in the not too distant future.

NextGen

GOGOLEV READY FOR JUNIOR GRAND PRIX DEBUT

BY ROBERT BRODIE

The future of Canadian men's skating hit the big time for the first time last January when 13-year-old Stephen Gogolev made his senior debut at the 2018 Canadian Championships in Vancouver. Despite his youth and height he did not look out of place in the field of 18 men.

Gogolev, who won the novice title in 2016 and the junior crown in 2017, said it "was really motivating" competing in the senior ranks for the first time and that his expectations heading into the event were to "just do my best, and try to do what I can do."

The Toronto-based teenager had a solid outing at nationals, placing 11th in the short (72.61), ninth in the free (148.20), finishing in 10th place with a combined score of 220.81.

"It was pretty good overall," Gogolev said. "I'm pretty happy with how I skated, but also a bit disappointed with the little mistakes that I made."

What he was particularly pleased with, however, was how he handled himself "with all the people there," adding that one of the lessons he learned at nationals was "not getting too nervous in front of a big crowd."

Brian Orser, who coaches Gogolev at the Toronto Cricket Club was happy with his student's first showing on Canada's biggest stage. "I'm really proud of him. It was his first time at a big boy event. His score was actually low for him," Orser said. "He had one jumping pass with a zero, the (triple) Axel that he popped. And he got a zero on his triple Lutz in the short program."

But it was what he landed that showed his potential. In the short program, Gogolev ripped off a quad Salchow-triple toe combination with ease and in the free, laid down another quad Salchow.

Both quad jumps elicited loud roars from the sold-out crowd — that in itself was a new experience for Gogolev, who had never before competed in front of such a

large audience. "As soon as I landed the jump, the crowd just roared and I felt more confident," he said. "It was my first time as a senior and having that many people watch me felt pretty good."

Gogolev also attempted a quad Lutz in the long program but after a shaky take off he turned it into a double. However, it was his final jumping pass in the free that really set jaws wagging. With less than a minute left, Gogolev threw in a clean triple Axel that seemingly came out of nowhere.

"He can do them all," Orser said of his student's proficiency with four-revolution jumps. "He's done them all in practice — the flip, the loop, and he did the toe in his last competition. But we're just pacing ourselves."

Orser said his student learned a lot of things in his first senior nationals experience. "There are things that you just can't teach. It's a matter for us (coaches) to observe and watch how he handled that whole situation. It would have been awesome for him to be in that last group, which was very possible. But at the same time, I've got to be realistic and say we need to take baby steps here. We have lots of time.

"He's been growing, and he'll grow some more so we'll take a few little hits here and there along the way. We need to work on presentation, but he's 13 ... you could not get me to emote anything when I was 13. But his scores are World junior scores ... as in, to win Junior Worlds."

Gogolev is age-eligible to compete on the Junior Grand Prix circuit this season, and Orser expects he will get a pair of assignments. "He has been good enough for the last two years, but it was just the age thing," Orser explained.

When asked which skaters he admires, Gogolev said, "All skaters have their own good things. I like Patrick Chan's skating skills, and how much speed he has between the jumps, his footwork and his



choreographic sequences."

Gogolev trains alongside world-class role models Yuzuru Hanyu and Javier Fernández. "He's on the same sessions as them and he gets a little competitive with them," Orser said. "Javier has been very supportive because he's a bit more personable and he gives him a shot every once in a while.

"The good thing about Stephen is he has a great foundation. He has great skating skills, he is a hard worker and he likes to compete.

"He's really something. And I think he's got the bug now."

DANIELIAN: FROM ZERO TO JUNIOR HERO

BY TATJANA FLADE

Artur Danielian was the third Russian man assigned to the 2018 World Junior Championships last March, but he surprised everyone, including himself, with a silver medal finish.

Danielian stood in eighth place after the short program, but delivered a clean free skate that included two triple Axels. “I told myself after the short, ‘I have nothing to lose. Just skate well, enjoy it and then it will be fine,’” he said. Coached by Elena Vodoretzova and Marina Selitskaia at the Central Army Sports Club in Moscow, Danielian did not expect to finish his season as a World Junior medalist — especially considering how it began.

He was selected to compete at the Junior Grand Prix in Latvia, but was replaced when he had a sub-par performance at the Moscow Championships. He was later sent to the fifth event in Croatia, but admitted his performance there was “mediocre, to say the least. Maybe I was nervous because I was for the first time at such a competition.” Danielian placed seventh and was not selected for a second assignment.

He qualified for Junior Worlds by placing third at Russian junior nationals. “It was just one step,” he said of his success. “I haven’t won a Junior Grand Prix or even a medal yet. A lot is still to come.”

In preparation for the upcoming season, Danielian has started working on the quad Salchow and quad loop, which is a bit unusual given that most start with the toe loop. “The quads are a work in progress. I was doing triples and I asked if I could try a quad. And so, it started,” Danielian explained. “I’ll also learn the (quad) Lutz for sure.

“For the flip it’s the edge and the toe is a problematic jump for me — it’s my least favorite jump because it doesn’t work well. I don’t have enough height or the right timing to fly high and rotate. But we’re working on that.”

His new programs for this season were choreographed by Nikita Mikhailov, a former singles skater who competed at the international level and has been performing in shows and working as a choreographer

since his retirement. “For the long we did something lively — there is a fast part and a calm part. It’s really classical,” Danielian said. “The short is not as classical, but lyrical. I like the programs and I’m getting into character.”

Originally from Volgograd in southern Russia, Danielian returned to his hometown in May to take his seventh grade exams. He plans to transfer to a school in Moscow this season. “In Moscow, I’ll also be home schooled, but there is a school close to the rink so I’ll go there once or twice a week to turn in homework and get new homework.”

The teenager likes informatics, mathematics, physics and arts and, in his spare time, likes to cook. “After I came back from Junior Worlds I fell sick twice, and in this time I looked up a recipe and learned to make a cake when nobody was home,” he explained. “When everyone came home I gave them the cake to try and in the end there was nothing left over for me. I have also made pizza with cheese and sausage and I made the dough myself.”

Danielian is the youngest of three children and the only athlete among them. He started figure skating when an ice rink opened near his home in Volgograd, and he and his mother visited it out of curiosity. He said he took to skating right away.

Though Danielian learned solid basics and triple jumps from his coaches at that rink, the conditions were not adequate for high-level sports.

With only one ice surface and many children wanting to learn to skate, there was not enough ice time for everyone. “The older skaters have to train more to be competitive with Moscow and St. Petersburg. When I started to have some results, my coach in Volgograd said I won’t get any further there and I need to move on,” Danielian explained.

He said he would move to Moscow, only if he could train with the coach of 2014 Olympic champion Adelina Sotnikova. His meeting with Vodoretzova in 2016 was a success. “She shook my hand and said ‘see you in June.’ I was so excited,” Danielian



recalled. As he was only 12 at the time, his family moved to Moscow with him.

Born in December 2003, he is not age eligible to move up to the senior ranks this season. His goal is to do well at his first Junior Grand Prix event in order to earn a second.

“I want to make the Junior Final. Then we have Russian junior nationals and I want to qualify again for Junior Worlds,” he said.

Danielian admires Japan’s Yuzuru Hanyu for coming back from injury to defend his Olympic title in February, but his skating idol is Javier Fernández.

“I like him the best. He is an artist who plays with the audience and at the same time he is jumping, spinning, smiling.”

Among the Russian men, his favorite is reigning national champion and World bronze medalist Mikhail Kolyada. “He has great jumps. The height is as if he jumps from a springboard. Obviously, I’d like it if he was consistent so he can compete with the other leaders. All of us boys need consistency,” Danielian said with a laugh.

He has solid skating skills and good posture, which Danielian said he learned from his choreographer in Volgograd. He continues that work with Irina Tagaeva and Maxim Zavozin works on his skating skills.

“In general, I like to perform, and I even get goosebumps during my skates,” Danielian said. “Sometimes I’m nervous, but I don’t feel it that much lately. That means I understand what I’m skating for.”

PHOTO: TATJANA FLADE

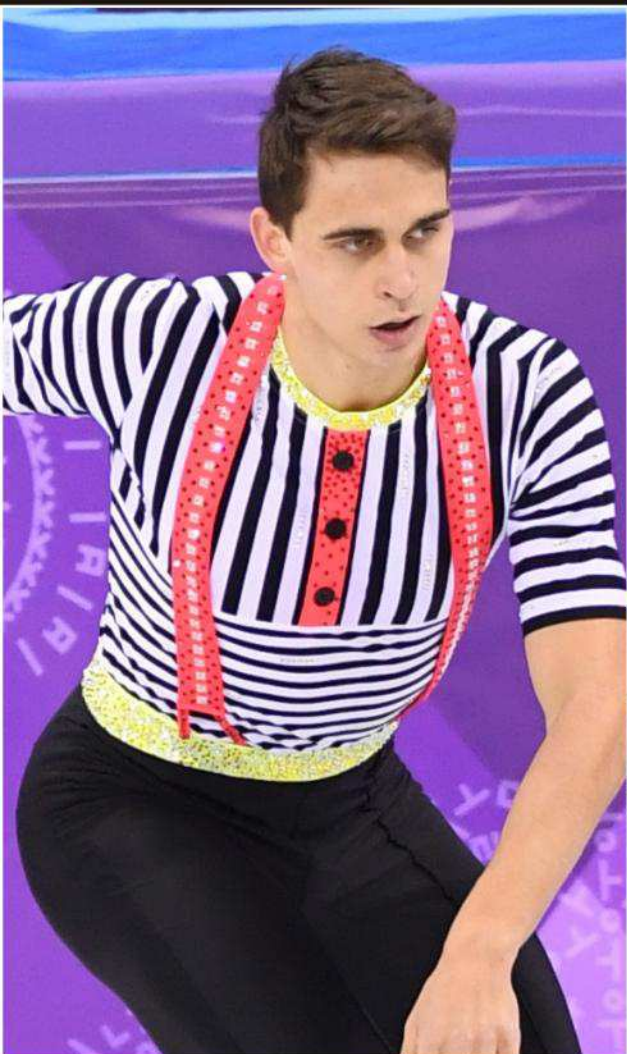
2018 Men's *Fashion*

SCORE



OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE:

- Kirill Khavalian (Spain)
- Misha Ge (Uzbekhistan)
- Shoma Uno (Japan)



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE:

- Scott Moir (Canada)
- Alper Uçar (Turkey)
- Martin Bidař (Czech Republic)



One of Canada's most popular athletes, **Elladj Baldé**, announced his retirement from competitive skating on May 4. Baldé, 27, who had been a member of the Canadian senior national team for a decade, said he had no regrets about calling an end to his career.

His performances at his seventh and final national championships were two of the best he had ever laid down. His short program brought the audience to its feet, and as took his final bows following a solid free skate the crowd rose once again to applaud his efforts. As he skated off the ice Baldé executed one of his trademark backflips, which gave his fans one more reason to cheer.

Though Baldé stood on an international podium only once in his career — winning 2015 Nebelhorn Trophy — he earned a legion of international fans with his entertaining performances and humble persona. No matter how tough the going got, Baldé always had a smile on his face.

As he spoke to reporters backstage at nationals in Vancouver he was beaming, despite knowing he would not be on the podium (he finished fourth) and had no chance of making the Olympic team. “I feel fantastic,” he said.

At the final competition of his career — Four Continents in February — he skated into eighth, his highest placement in three appearances at the competition. “I can’t express the amount of gratitude I have for all my peers and fans who have given me endless support throughout the years,” Baldé said. “Finishing my career, the way I did at Canadian nationals was one of the most fulfilling moments of my life, and I am so thrilled to forge ahead with the exciting opportunities that lie in my professional career.”

Baldé and his former teammate, Liam Firus, formed a new company, Skate Global, a multi-faceted platform that provides insight, assistance and training methods to coaches and young figure skaters around the world. Baldé also plans to continue skating in professional shows and to begin a new career as a choreographer.

Max Aaron announced his retirement without fanfare on April 20, closing out a seven-year career on the international senior circuit. The 26-year-old Scottsdale, Arizona, native moved to Colorado Springs after his high school graduation to train at the World Arena with Tom Jakrajsek and Becky Calvin.

In 2011 Aaron won the U.S. junior title and placed fifth at the World Junior Championships. Two years later at age 20, he claimed his only senior national crown. A seventh-place finish at the 2013 World Championships was his best result in four appearances.

Finishing third at 2014 nationals left him off the U.S. Olympic team. Aaron said struggling with three quads in his long program that season dissipated his confidence. The following season, he won his only Grand Prix title at 2015 Skate America.

His hopes of making the 2018 U.S. Olympic team were dashed when he placed a distant ninth at nationals.

Aaron found some redemption when, at the last minute, he was named as the replacement for the 2018 World Championships after Adam Rippon withdrew and Jason Brown and Ross Miner declined the invitation.

In Milan, Aaron skated into 11th place and that result, combined with Nathan Chen's first-place finish, guaranteed the U.S. three places at 2019 Worlds. “Of course, becoming an Olympian, or having an Olympic medal would have been great to ride off on my white horse, but having the ability to say that I have no regrets in my entire career of figure skating, for me that is my gold medal,” Aaron said. “It’s really been a great ride. I have no regrets.”

Aaron balanced his competitive skating schedule with school, graduating magna cum laude from the University of Colorado Springs with a bachelor degree in business in December 2017.

Earlier this year Aaron moved back to Arizona and now works with a large financial corporation in Scottsdale. “I think it’s important to always move forward,” he said.





Liubov Ilyushechkina has moved on from the world of competitive skating following the retirement of Dylan Moscovitch, her pairs partner of four years. The 26-year-old announced at the end of May she would be joining Cirque de Soleil.

Born in Moscow, Ilyushechkina first represented Russia with Nodari Maisuradze. The duo claimed the 2009 World Junior title and in 2010 won Skate Canada International. The partnership ended in March 2012.

Ilyushechkina then teamed up with Yannik Kocon of France, but that arrangement was short-lived when the Russian federation advised it would not grant her a release.

In May 2014, Moscovitch, who was looking for a new partner following his split with Kirsten Moore-Towers, contacted Ilyushechkina. The pair had a successful tryout in Detroit and a month later they were training at the Toronto Cricket Club with Lee Barkell and Bryce Davison.

With two different styles of skating it took time for Ilyushechkina and Moscovitch to find their groove, but as they began to gel as a team their results began to improve. The duo's first podium finishes at major international events came during the 2016–2017 season, when they claimed silver at Nebelhorn Trophy and bronze at Skate Canada, Cup of China and Four Continents.

Ilyushechkina received Canadian citizenship in September 2017, which cleared the path to earning a place on the 2018 Olympic team. However, technical errors at their international assignments left Ilyushechkina and Moscovitch off every podium in 2017.

At the 2018 Canadian Championships, they struggled in both the short and long programs and, in a tough field with four teams vying for the three berths on the Olympic team, they came up short finishing in fourth place.



In late May, Jason Brown announced he had made a coaching change, moving north of the border to train with Brian Orser, Tracy Wilson and their team at the Toronto Cricket Club.

Orser confirmed Kori Ade, with whom Brown had trained for 18 years, supported the move and had “given this arrangement her blessing.”

Brown, 23, failed to make the 2018 Olympic team after a sixth-place finish at U.S. nationals in January and said he struggled to move on from that disappointment. He declined the invitation to fill the spot that became available at the 2018 World Championships when Adam Rippon withdrew.

Karen Preston and Lee Barkell will work with Brown on a daily basis, Orser said. “We have taken him on as a team so it is not just going to be one person working with him.”

David Wilson has choreographed a new long program for Brown.



China's Boyang Jin is also relocating to Canada to work with Brian Orser and Tracy Wilson at the Toronto Cricket Club.

Fourth at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, Jin had a disastrous outing at the World Championships a month later, placing a distant 19th — the worst result of his entire career.

Orser met with members of the Chinese skating federation in Milan to discuss the new coaching arrangement and Jin joined the club in mid-June.

“With the 2022 Olympics being in Beijing, it is important to get him prepared to medal at those Games,” said Orser, adding his team intends to give him the direction and guidance “and go through the same kind of process that we did with Javier Fernández.”

Lori Nichol choreographed two new competitive programs for Jin for the upcoming season. Kurt Browning crafted a fun exhibition number for the Chinese champion.

Quicksteps

► STAY OR GO?



Ashley Wagner may not be done with her skating career.

The 27-year-old American will decide what comes next for her sometime in August or September, her coach **Rafael Arutyunyan** said in a recent interview. "She will make the decision about her future career and probably she will continue to skate."

► NEW GRAD

Sarah Hughes, the 2002 Olympic champion, graduated from Penn Law (University of Pennsylvania Law School) on May 15.



The 33-year-old graduated from Yale University in 2009 with a degree in American studies. No word on where, or what area of law, she plans to practice.

► CHANGING TIMES

With pairs coach Nina Mozer taking a sabbatical to recuperate and re-energize, the Russian Figure Skating Federation announced that 2014 Olympic pairs champion **Maxim Trankov** is now the official coach of **Evgenia Tarasova** and **Vladimir Morozov**.

Along with his coaching duties, Trankov will be responsible for music and choreography choices.



Five-time World champion **Robin Szolkowy**, who has worked with the team the past four years, will continue in his role as the technical coach.

Tarasova and Morozov have chosen Skate America and Rostelecom Cup as their Grand Prix assignments this season.

► SPLITSVILLE

The promising young Czech pairs team of **Anna Dušková**, 18, and **Martin Bidař**, 19, called it quits in April. The 2016 World Junior champions are both looking for new partners.

Bidař wants to train abroad (preferably in Canada) and gain experience, while Dušková wants to combine skating and school in her homeland.

May was not a good

month for Russian coach, **Eteri Tutberidze**. On the same day **Evgenia Medvedeva** announced she was moving on, **Polina Tsurskaya**, the 2015 Junior Grand Prix Final champion also parted ways with Tutberidze, her coach of five years.



Russian media reported there was a disagreement between coach and student at the rink and Tsurskaya left.

► COMING FULL CIRCLE

U.S. pairs team **Haven Denney** and **Brandon Frazier** have returned to Florida to train with **John Zimmerman**, **Silvia Fontana** and **Jeremy Barrett**.

The 2013 World Junior champions were previously coached by the Zimmerman team from 2012 to 2015.

Denney and Frazier had been training with **Rockne Brubaker** and **Stefania Berton** in Geneva, Illinois since April 2016.

Kazakhstan's **Elizabet Tursynbayeva** has left her Toronto coaching team and returned to Russia to train with Tutberidze.

The 18-year-old had previously worked with Tutberidze, but was forced to leave in 2013 when Russia forbade coaches from working with non-Russian skaters prior to the 2014 Olympic Winter Games.



Tursynbayeva, who was born in Moscow, had trained with Brian Orser and Tracy Wilson for five years.

► MAKING THE CUT

ESPN published its annual World Fame 100 list on May 22.

Japan's **Yuzuru Hanyu** ranked 70th on the list, predominantly comprised of men.

Canada's **Tessa Virtue** ranked 16th on ESPN's top 25 most famous women in the world list. Alina Zagitova placed 19th, ahead of Medvedeva who was 22nd.

► PUPPY LOVE



Alina Zagitova always wanted a dog. She fell in love with the Japanese Akita breed while training in Japan with the Russian Olympic team prior to the 2018 Winter Games.

On May 26, the Akita-Inu Preservation Society of Japan presented her with a three-month old female puppy at a ceremony in Moscow. Zagitova named the pup Masaru (Victory).

2018 COMPETITION SCHEDULES

DATE	JUNIOR GRAND PRIX	LOCATION
Aug. 22 - 25	Slovakia	Bratislava
Aug. 29 - Sep. 1	Austria	Linz
Sep. 5 - 8	Lithuania	Kaunas (no pairs)
Sep. 19 - 22	China	Harbin
Sep. 26 - 29	Czech Republic	Ostrava
Oct. 3 - 6	Slovenia	Ljubljana (no pairs)
Oct. 10 - 13	Armenia	Yerevan (no pairs)
Dec. 6 - 9	JUNIOR GRAND PRIX FINAL	Vancouver, Canada

The 2018, seven-event Junior Grand Prix Series is open to skaters who reach the age of 13 by July 1, 2018, but have not turned 19 (for singles, and ladies in pairs and ice dance), or 21 (for male pairs skaters and ice dancers). Competitors for this Series are chosen by their countries according to their federation's selection procedures. The number of entries allotted to each International Skating Union member federation in each discipline is determined by the results of the 2018 World Junior Championships.

DATE	CHALLENGER SERIES	LOCATION
Aug. 1 - 5	Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy	Bangkok, Thailand
Sep. 12 - 16	Lombardia Trophy	Bergamo, Italy
Sep. 12 - 16	U.S. International Figure Skating Classic	Salt Lake, City U.S.
Sep. 19 - 22	26 th Ondrej Nepela Trophy	Bratislava, Slovakia
Sep. 20 - 22	Autumn Classic International	Oakville, Canada
Sep. 26 - 29	Nebelhorn Trophy	Oberstdorf, Germany
Oct. 4 - 7	Finlandia Trophy Espoo 2018	Espoo, Finland
Nov. 11 - 18	Inge Solar Memorial - Alpen Trophy	Innsbruck, Austria
Nov. 26 - Dec. 2	Tallinn Trophy	Tallinn, Estonia
Dec. 5 - 8	Golden Spin of Zagreb	Zagreb, Croatia

The Challenger Series, first introduced in the 2014-2015 season, offers all age-eligible skaters the opportunity to compete on a number of international stages. For skaters not seeded for Grand Prix assignments, these events offer a platform to test their skills against some of the best, and earn World Standing Points in the process. The Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy, which had been an ASU international competition since 2007, is now part of the Challenger Series. The Inge Solar Memorial–Alpen Trophy has replaced the Cup of Tyrol Innsbruck.

2018 GRAND PRIX SERIES

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Oct. 19 - 21	Skate America	Everett, Washington
Oct. 26 - 28	Skate Canada	Laval Québec
Nov. 2 - 4	Cup of China	Beijing
Nov. 9 - 11	NHK Trophy	Hiroshima, Japan
Nov. 16 - 18	Rostelecom Cup	Moscow, Russia
Nov. 23 - 25	Internationaux de France	Grenoble
Dec. 6 - 9	SENIOR GRAND PRIX FINAL	Vancouver, Canada

International **FIGURE SKATING**

EXCLUSIVE

Photos & Interviews
+ All the Latest
News!



GET THE INSIDE EDGE!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

U.S./CANADA
1-844-357-2044

Online @ ifsmagazine.com

READ IT
ON YOUR
IPAD, IPHONE,
KINDLE OR
NOOK