

## HOLIDAY POPS

Since skating has been added back into the Quad City Symphony's Holiday Pops concert, we have had a number of questions from folks who weren't around in previous years. We hope to answer many of those questions here.

Holiday Pops is a very special opportunity for our skaters to perform at the iwireless Center before a large audience, to live symphonic music, with professional lighting. It gives the skaters a chance to experience what professional show skating is like. Since there is only one dress rehearsal with the orchestra, the atmosphere is fast-paced and no-nonsense.

Holiday Pops is not a club show, although it uses FSCQC skaters. The Symphony decides each year whether or not to include skating in the show, then hires a Skating Director (Shari Baker at the present time) to put together the skating portion of the concert. The understanding is that local skaters will be used, but outside talent can be brought in if necessary. It is not possible to use every club skater in the show. The ice surface is very small, and, while we appreciate the efforts of all our skaters and applaud them in regular club shows or recitals, not everyone is ready to perform before the general public.

We do not typically hold formal auditions for the show. Our coaches know all our club skaters and observe them on a daily basis, so it is not necessary to spend money on ice for auditions. The casting process begins when we receive recordings of the music from the Symphony, usually in mid-summer. The coaches listen, decide what the concept for each number will be, and decide what skaters are needed for each number. The number of skaters used, and their ages and skill sets, vary from year to year depending on the demands of the music. Skaters chosen for the cast are notified individually in August, and rehearsals begin immediately after Labor Day. Skaters in the show must agree to be available for rehearsals, and must make a financial commitment to purchasing their own costumes and paying for extra ice time if necessary.

Here are things the coaches look for when casting the show. Skaters who do these things not only improve their chances of being cast in Holiday Pops, but make themselves stronger skaters and better competitors in general.

### **Skating Skills**

Skaters who have higher level skills give us more to work with. While skaters still at the Basic Skills levels have been cast from time to time, typically we are looking at skaters who have begun their official USFS testing. Age can matter here, too. A skill that is impressive when performed by a 6 year old isn't quite so impressive if the skater is 16.

How to prepare:

- **Spend as much time on the ice as possible.** The skaters who improve the most are generally the ones who skate a lot.

- **Continue to progress in your USFS testing.** Moves in the Field or Dance tests can help improve the quality of edging and footwork.
- **Consider doing synchro.** Synchronized skaters get extra time on the ice, gaining experience with the kinds of team maneuvers that can be used in show programs. Young skaters who cannot yet do big jumps can still look impressive to the public if they can do organized formations such as wheels and intersections.

### **Presentation Skills**

It's not just about what you do, but also about how you do it. Some skaters are more naturally graceful than others, but all can improve with proper instruction. Physical appearance can also be a factor in whether a skater can be cast in particular ways.

How to prepare:

- **Take ballet classes, if at all possible.** Dance, especially ballet, is invaluable for developing posture, grace, body alignment, and many other things.
- **Perform whenever you can.** Take advantage of opportunities to skate in club recitals and shows. Compete in artistic events, to help develop your ability to interpret music, handle props, or play a character.
- **Learn about good nutrition.** Consume an appropriate number of calories through a healthy, balanced diet.

### **Attitude**

We need skaters who are attentive and cooperative. They need to be able to follow directions, and to wait patiently if they are not being worked with directly at any given time. They need to be able to attend rehearsals consistently, on time, with all necessary equipment. They need to understand that they are part of something much bigger than themselves.

How to prepare:

- **Be a coachable skater.** Whenever you work with your coach, practice good listening skills. Don't say "I can't", but instead "I'll try". Always give your best effort.
- **Be a responsible skater.** Know how to tie your own skates, and be responsible for the contents of your skate bag. A show skater has to be responsible backstage for all their costume pieces and accessories, hair ornaments, makeup, etc. The show cannot stop to wait for a skater who can't find something, or who misses a cue because they aren't paying attention.
- **Be a team player.** Skating is an individual sport, but a show is a group effort. It's not all about you. Don't waste energy worrying about whether somebody else has a better part than you or has more sparkles on her costume. Concentrate on doing the job you were asked to do as well as you possibly can.
- **Practice recovering from mistakes.** Whenever you skate, train yourself to recover from falls by getting up as quickly as possible, with a smile on your face, and continuing with your program as if nothing had happened.

While we cannot promise anyone a spot in Holiday Pops, we hope to have the opportunity to include many of you in future shows . Even without considering Pops, your coaches are dedicated to helping each of you become the best skater you can be. If you work diligently together, you'll be well on your way!

***Work hard and SK8 GR8!***