



Rockin': Olympic medalist Nancy Kerrigan and Matt Williams as everyone's favorite couple Sandy and Danny from Rydell High in "Grease on Ice."

Nancy Kerrigan returns to Detroit in 'Grease on Ice'

Grease on Ice 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 16; 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 17, at Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Dr., Detroit. Tickets \$40, \$27.50 and \$17.50, at the Fox Theatre and Joe Louis Arena box offices, or Ticketmaster outlets. To charge tickets, call (248) 645-6666 or online at www.ticketmaster.com. For information about performance times, call (313) 983-6606.

BY KEELY WYDONIK
STAFF WRITER
kwydonik@oe.houcomm.net

It's easy to imagine Tanya Harding as one of the Pink Ladies in "Grease," but Nancy Kerrigan as a brunette Sandra Dee is harder to envision. "She's the girl next door, she's very sweet," said co-director and choreographer Barry Lather who taught her all the right moves in "Grease on Ice" opening Saturday for three performances at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Still, some people will be asking "why" and thinking about the whack on the knee that Kerrigan suffered on Jan. 6, 1994 during the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Detroit. An associate of Harding's was later charged with the crime. Kerrigan recovered from her injury and won a silver medal at the 1994 U.S. Olympics. "She's way past what happened in Detroit, but it's still there," said Lather. "The role of Sandy is good for her. She's pretty much an all-American girl."

Married and the mother of a son, Matthew, Kerrigan said

"She was under a lot of pressure, her back was up against the wall to learn, and did really well. She's used to going on the ice and being Nancy Kerrigan, not Sandy. She had to capture the role and learn Sandy's body language and how to move to the music. It's a lot to learn. It's not just a dance show, you have to tell a story."

Barry Lather
choreographer for "Grease"

"Grease on Ice" was an opportunity I couldn't pass up - I grew up loving the dancing, the music and the energy of "Grease."

"The music is undeniable, the songs are great, and there's a boy meets girl love story," said Lather who is known for his award-winning music videos with Janet Jackson and Paula Abdul. Choreographing "Grease on Ice" was a challenge. He had worked with skaters before, including Kristi Yamaguchi and Kerrigan, but never did a 90-minute production.

"I played hockey growing up, but I never figure skated," he said in a telephone interview from St. Paul, Minnesota. "I've been dancing all my life." With the help of his assistant, Jamie Isley, an accomplished skater, Lather worked to create a high energy blend of skating and dancing with a rock 'n' roll edge in "Grease on Ice."

"This was a tough job," said Lather. "I needed a great skating assistant to communicate what I wanted to the skaters. If it was

a move the skaters had seen before, I didn't want to do it. I wanted to create fun moves that compliment the music of "Grease," I wanted it to be a great show."

The cast doesn't stand still long in "Grease on Ice" there is only a couple of ballads, but lots of high energy songs including "Greased Lightnin'" and "We go Together."

"They have to totally act out their lines through body language," said Lather about the cast of 28 skaters who lip-sync their lines. "They're got to be able to project. You've got to over-act. It's not like doing the show on a Broadway stage, you've got 12,000 to 13,000 people in an arena."

Lather said some of the dance stuff was hard on the skaters, but he pushed knowing that they could do it. Before the show opened on Nov. 20, Lather and his cast practiced six days a week, 12 hours a day beginning in early October.

Kerrigan met Lather in 1995 when he choreographed a number for a Disney special she was in. They shot the commercial for "Grease on Ice" before the show opened. "She had a tough job," said Lather about Kerrigan. "She was able to rehearse with us for only eight days. She was under a lot of pressure, her back was up against the wall to learn, and did really well. She's used to going on the ice and being Nancy Kerrigan, not Sandy. She had to capture the role and learn Sandy's body language and how to move to the music. It's a lot to learn. It's not just a dance show, you have to tell a story."

Lather said he was impressed by Kerrigan's can-do attitude. "When you want to show her something she wants to know it now. She wants to work, work, until it's done. I really like that. She just came in and learned it."

"Grease" was first presented on a small stage in Chicago in June 1971. After sitting through the five hour production, New York producers, Allan Carr and Robert Stigwood encouraged the playwrights, Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, to trim the show to two hours.

"Grease" quickly became a hit off-Broadway, and on Broadway where it remained for almost seven-and-a-half years.

In 1978 Stigwood and Carr released the film version starring John Travolta as Danny Zuko and Olivia Newton-John as Sandy.

"Grease on Ice" is presented by Feld Entertainment and The Troika Organization.

'Classics on the Lake' features love songs

Love will be the theme of "Classics on the Lake" 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 24, in the shrine chapel at St. Mary's College at Orchard Lake and Commerce Ronds in Orchard Lake.

Lyric tenor David Troiano and soprano Valerie Yova will perform a program they call "Sweethearts" featuring operatic arias and Broadway duets. Tickets are \$15 and \$25, call (248) 683-1750.

One segment of the concert, "Love Across the Waters," will feature arias in German, Spanish, Polish and Italian. Another, "Love American Style," will spotlight Troiano and Yova in a number of duets from Broadway.

Troiano and Yova will be accompanied by pianist Joseph Gurt, a graduate of the Julliard School of Music and a professor of music at Eastern Michigan.

Gospel from page E1

Morgan Freeman was selected to perform a role in "Driving Miss Daisy" off Broadway and Lee Breuer called me," he said. "I had been working with him and he asked if I would substitute for Morgan but initially I hesitated. The reason I hesitated is that I had never played church, it's been a serious thing to me. Then thinking about it and praying about it, I accepted the opportunity."

Miller said the story of Oedipus wanderings after he discovers that he has murdered his father and married his mother is a powerful lesson. Oedipus, who has torn out his eyes in shame, is reduced to the lowest depths before finding redemption in the town of Colonus.

Breuer got the idea for the show after Telson took him to see a performance by the Five Blind Boys of Alabama.

Miller said since he did the

part, he loved it.

"The audience seemed to be pleased by it, uplifted by it. It seemed to bless people night after night," he said. "The people responded enthusiastically. My spirit was high. I couldn't have gotten through the production without a spiritual high."

Miller went on to perform for six weeks on Broadway.

"The Gospel at Colonus" has won audience and critical favor, winning the off-Broadway Obie for Outstanding Musical, nominations for a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award, a Grammy and an LA Inner Circle Critics Award. It has been performed around the world and has been broadcast on PBS' "Great Performances."

"I play the part of the messenger. It's a church, a black church setting," Miller said. "I come and do a first sermon which sets the tone and pace for the whole production. My part is the part that

holds the whole thing together."

The musical groups act like a Greek chorus, emphasizing the theme with the driving rhythm of black gospel music.

In an interview with the Salt Lake Tribune, Telson, who is white, describes how he was inspired to write the music.

"One thing that I've always been impressed with in the black church experience is that there seems to be a lot of emphasis on love. There's a mixture of joy and love and tragedy - the wide range of emotions we have in our lives," Telson said.

Miller's congregation has responded favorably to the play's portrayal of their church and the performance of their pastor.

"It came here last year and they loved it," he said. "They feel good about me doing it. They appreciate the adulation their pastor receives."

Observer & Eccentric
NEWSPAPERS
17th Annual

travel

PLYMOUTH ICE SPECTACULAR

Jan 13 - 18

Community Federal Credit Union

PEOPLES STATE BANK

CARVING COMPETITIONS

Student Competitions Team Competitions

National City

FANTASYLAND LIGHT SHOW

Q95.5

WARM UP CENTER

Jan 16 & 17 • Listen to Q-95 for details

Warm the family at the Plymouth Masonic Temple • Culinary Delights by Schoolcraft CC

Accommodations by
Mayflower Hotel
Plymouth Quality Inn

"Full Schedule" on our Web Site: <http://oeonline.com/plymouthice>

Presented by The Plymouth International Ice Spectacular, Inc.

Observer & Eccentric
NEWSPAPERS

WIN FOUR RINKSIDE TICKETS!

HAMILTON

LIPINSKI

YAMAGUCHI

KULIK

DISCOVER STARS & ICE

GORDEVA

BECHKE & PETROV

CHEN

MENO & SAND

SUMMERS

ROCA & SUR COUSINS

1998-99 TOUR

SANDRA BEZIC
MICHAEL SEINERT

www.starsandice.com

FEBRUARY 6, 1999 • 8 PM

Mail your name, address and daytime phone number to:
Discover Stars & Ice, 2 Championship Drive, Auburn Hills, MI 48326.
Tickets available at The Palace Box Office and www.palaceboxoffice.com
Charge (248) 643-6666.

Check the classified section on January 24 and find out if you are a winner.

The winners will receive a Family Four Pack of tickets to see Discover Stars & Ice on February 6, 1999 at The Palace. One winner will win the grand prize - four rinkside seats. All winners must be over the age of 18. No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. ©1999 Discover Stars & Ice. All rights reserved.

WINIC 99.3