Skaters help tell 'The Christmas Angel' story

"Mannheim Steamroller Holiday Ice Show - "The Christmas Angel," 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19, Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Dr., Detroit. Tickst (\$50 Gold Circle seats, \$35 and \$25), available at Joe Louis Arena, and Fox Theatre box offices, and all Ticketmaster locations, call (248) 645-6666, or on-line at uwww.ticketmaster.com For information, call (313) 983-6606.

BY KEELY WYGONIK STAFF WRITER kwygonik@oe.homecomm.net

With little ones at home, Christmas is a special time for Chip Davis, creator of Mannheim

Chip Davis, creator of Mannheim Steamroller.

"Tve gotten really involved with Christmas," said Davis in a telephone interview from San Diego. "It wann't intentional, it just happened. I've got a 7-year-old daughter, a 2-year-old son, and a new release, a girl, due in January, It's becoming increasingly more evident to me that there a a need to create quality times framilies."

A 1969 gradaate of the University of Michigan, Davis still has ties to the school, and lots of great memories. He ceently wrote a piece to dedicate the new bell tower on campus. "It was the foundation of overything I vedone," he said about the time he spent at U-M. "It was not a neasy school, it was a tot of work. Steamroller

school, it was a lot of work.



Hollday show: Colorful costumes, sets and skaters are part of Mannheim Steamroller's holiday ice show, "The Christmas Angel."

Davis was born into a family of musicians and began his training on piano at age 4. He graduated from U-M as a classically trained bassoonist and played percussion in the school's marching band.

Trivia buffs will know him for his 1975 hit song, "Convoy." In 1976 he was named Country Music Writer of the Year. Since then he's been busy exploring new ways of expressing himself musi-

This year he's introducing "The Christmas Angel," a holiday tale brought to life by a cast of 50 Olympic and World Champion skaters that includes Doroth Hamill, Jozef Sabovcik, and Tonia Kiwitkowski. "We have a society of kids killing kils," suid Davis. "The underpinnings are a lack of a family. The entertainment we see is so violent — monkey see, monkey do, hello! I'm on a mission to create family entertainment."

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He chose Christman because it's a time when people are more open. 'It's an emotional time for family and friends to be together,' he explained.

"The Christmas Angel,' his newest project, gives families three options. They can buy the CD and cend the story of 'The ingo to the music, watch the apecial that will air Saturday, Dec. 19, on NBC, or see the show at Joe Louis Arena on the same day.

day.
"I'm trying to focus on creating

"I'm trying to focus on creating quality entertainment for family and friends," he said. "I create musical backforps for life."

The production will be narrated via video display by Olivia Newton-John and Davis, and feature colorful costumes and sets, and a musical background of updated Christmas classics such as a rockin "Carol of the Bells," "Greenslevers," and "Good King Wenceslaus."

Davis said he decided that in addition to narration and music, skaters could best tell the story of "The Christmas Angel," because they can glide, jump and do lots of things.

Many skaters, he learned, have already skated to his music, and knew it well. Davis wanted to keep things simple, and let the nusic and action tell the story.

He met Dorothy Hamill and Olivin Newton John through mutual friends. "We're all older parents who have done the career part and are having kids," said Davis who is 51. "When you have your career under your belt it creates a different aspect of sensitivity."

"The Christmas Angel" takes place in the little village of Hamler on the night before Christmas Eve. When they place the angel, the very last ornament, on the tree, the toys are allowed to play before they become Christmas presents, "Gargon steals the angel of the Christmas tree and takes her to the Netherland. The toys are stuck in life and can't become presents again. It makes them cry," explained Davis.

Dorothy Hamill, who portrays the moin, goes to the Netherland to hint down the ceil Gargon and rescue the angel. The energy of good overcomes bad, said, pais, "Gargon isn't a bad guy, he just got off track, but that doesn't mean he can't get back on."

Music below set the tone for

me jors got on tracts, but that doesn't mean he can't get back on.

Music helps set the tone for the story, "Greensleeves is be emotional," said Davis, "The angel is lost and alone and has no idea how shell get back.

Skating fans will enjoy the show, but it's not intended to the a skating extravaganza," by story driven," said Davis, "file a movie on ice."

As we talked, Davis was buy getting ready for the tour, "They're loading it on the truck, he said. Davis will be on the road with the Mannheim Steamfolf; Christmas Show," which is also touring select U.S. (sites, b. t. hell be home for Christmas.

Thaven't had a normal Christmas, "I haven't had a normal Christmas since 1984," he said. "Tore to cook, We'll have Wassail, Tee got the arignnal 11-56, recipe, ham or turkey, I'll spend, the day fidding around in the kitchen. I might make a pic."

Hilberry offers stirring 'Tale of 2 Cities'

The Hilberry, WSU's graduate theatre company, presents the midwest premiere of the Charles Dickens' classic, 'A Tale of Two Cities.' The show will run in rolating repertory through March 4. Tickets can be purchased by calling the theatre box office at (313)577-2972 from 11 a.m. to 6 nm, weekdows. p.m. weekdays. By SUE SUCHYTA SPECIAL WRITTER

The entire Hilberry company has come together to present the Midwest premiere of Dickens' classic "A Tale of Two Cities." Adapted for the stage by Nagle Jackson, the play was previously performed in San Francisco and Princeton.

From the classic opening line, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," play goes know they are in for a literary treat, with a stirring, passionate script and a fascinating historical backdrop. Set against the

French Revolution, "A Tale of Two Cities" is a story of political intrigue and romance.

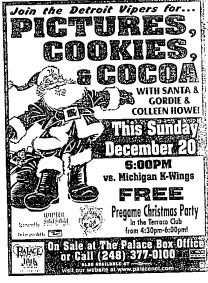
Lucie Manette, a young lady of French birth living with a guardian in England, discovers that her father, long thought dend, has been liberated from the notroious Bastille, where he was wrongly imprisoned for many years. As she returns to England to nurse her father, she meets a young French noble, who, disillusioned by his uncless abuse of power and people, has renounced his title and expatriated himself to England. When the British accuse the noble of being a spx, Lucie is called upon to teatify. The outcome seems bleak until his lawyer's crafty assistant, Sydney Carton, who bears an uncanay resemblance to the nobleman (now known as Charles of Darnay), comes to Charles' aid. Sydny and Charles of the fall in love with Lucie. It is difference are real-ented by the control of the free and the contro

tions on her sleeve.

Hilberry veteran David Engleman, having appeared earlier in the senson as Trotter in "Mouse-trap" and the prince in "Huntet, seems intent on setting a Hilberry season record for playing the most consecutive troubled souls. He is, nontheless, stirring and convincing as Dr. Manette, the victim of many years of abuse in the Bostille.

Erik Gratton's role as Sydney Carton, is also complex. Carton, the barrister's assistant, is indifferent yet candid; abrasive and uncaring yet ultimately honorable. Gratton is also emplex, carton, the survives are self-serving or pure. His seene with Sara Wolf, a woman awaiting the guillotine, is poignaut.

The costumes, from the rags of the nobility, set the historical tone of the play.



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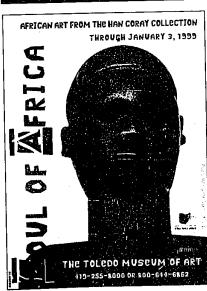
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