

Ice Command Workshops

by Barbara Feinman

My skating instructor said to me one day, as she observed my somewhat uncertain edges, "You should sign up for one of Cecily Morrow's 'Ice Command' workshops. Truth is, after years of on-again-off-again skating, my posture, edges, and flow needed work.

Following her advice, I participated in two of Cecily's workshop options, "Ice Energy" and "Gustave Lussi Method" classes. About thirty skaters, primarily adults, of differing skill levels assembled for an off-ice review of skate lacing (according to the way Lussi taught her), and basics of posture and alignment. On-ice, Cecily led us through various exercises, encouraging us to "trust the lean." We sailed down the ice, in unison, groups of four and five, utilizing ballet-derived concepts - plié, pointed toe, turn-out, carefully aligned positions over hip, knee, foot. My muscles complained, but haunting "New Wave" and inspiring classical music elevated my spirit as I strove to emulate her command of technique and the "feel" of efficient use of the frozen surface.

Ice Energy workshops vary music and format to suit the age and expectations of each group. For competitors she uses more challenging music - classic and current rock, reggae, flamenco, or perhaps a saxophone concerto.

"Ice Command" offers three interrelated workshop options, tailored to needs of skaters and coaches (instructors request assistance with certain aspects of their skaters' performance), Gustave Lussi Method, Ice Energy, and Group Freestyle Training.

Cecily began giving Gustave Lussi Method workshops in response to requests from those who knew of her extensive work documenting the spin and jump techniques devised during Mr. Lussi's phenomenally successful seventy year coaching career. Today's best freestyle performances derive from his unique inventions and the teaching theory he summarized as "systematic figure skating."

Ice Energy draws also upon Cecily's opportune exposure to great skaters and coaches of her time. In years of training at major ice centers and during her experience as co-founder of The Ice Theatre of New York, she trained and performed with skaters from the John Curry company, including Rob McBrien, whom she credits for his excellence in relating ballet concepts to what we do on blades. Ice Energy workshops are "primarily dance and music-oriented, designed to energize and integrate the skater's body, actively involve us with our surroundings - air, ice surface, audience (real or imagined) - so as to 'command' our skates, our bodies, the space within which we move." She

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has a personal off-ice regimen of dance classes; she attributes to this, and dance training at her alma mater, Smith College, much of her physical command of what she does on ice.

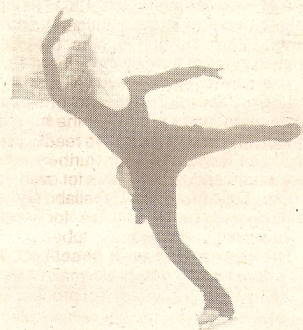
Cecily cites certain fine skaters of our day, how they exemplify what she terms "command." With details of technique already mastered, purity of line and essentials of real skating - lean, edges, alignment - ingrained so as to be automatic, they have the "freedom to skate inspired performances."

Cecily states that the objective, both in her Ice Command workshops and in video productions she has undertaken, is to bring to interested skaters not just technical information which has been integrant to her life, but the "essence of ice/blade experience, an informed, detailed, sense of motion relevant to human enjoyment of water's solid phase."

That's what Ice Command workshops

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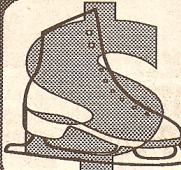


Cecily Morrow

are about. I'll be back for more. My edges? Still wobbly, but now I know more about why and what to do about it.

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