

Swan Lake on Ice comes to The Playhouse

✘ The world's premiere theatrical ice skating company, THE IMPERIAL ICE STARS, return to the UK this autumn with a dynamic new interpretation of their award-winning masterpiece Swan Lake on Ice, as part of a two year, 22-country world tour. Swan Lake on Ice begins its 2011 UK tour at The Playhouse in Edinburgh on Tuesday 18 January.

The Imperial Ice Stars have received standing ovations from UK audiences on each of their previous three tours (Sleeping Beauty on Ice 2004, Swan Lake on Ice 2006, Cinderella on Ice 2008/09) and earned outstanding reviews with their adrenaline-infused performances.

This production of Swan Lake on Ice features exhilarating new choreography and some of the world's most stylish dancing on ice from Artistic Director Tony Mercer, widely regarded as the world's leading creator of theatre on ice, as well as new effects and costumes.

The 26 World, European and National Championship skaters, who between them hold more than 250 competition medals, take contemporary ice dance to a new level with their daring and graceful feats – some of which are so complex they haven't yet been named – in the intimate setting of a frozen theatre stage.

“Inspired by my research into Tchaikovsky's original score and intentions for the story, I wanted to create a more realistic interpretation of this much-loved tale and transpose it onto ice, creating a new art form in the process – ice dance in a full theatrical setting,” explains Tony Mercer. “I always felt it was a natural fit, to have swans gliding on ice.”

“I created our original Swan Lake on Ice four years ago in a

classical style with elements of contemporary ice dance. With this production I've significantly re-worked the choreography to incorporate even more contemporary skating manoeuvres, and challenged our skaters to reach for new heights again!"

The costuming has also been refined for this new production, with some dazzling and sophisticated designs from renowned costumier Albina Gabueva of Moscow's Stanislavsky Theatre, and made by the famous Bolshoi Ballet's costume cutters.

✘ Swan Lake on Ice will be performed against lavish backdrops and scenery created by one of Australasia's leading scenic designers, Eamon D'Arcy. Together with Tchaikovsky's uplifting music, this innovative portrayal of the classic love story will take your breath away.

The Imperial Ice Stars have performed to almost three million people across five continents, at some of the world's most prestigious venues – London's Royal Albert Hall and Sadler's Wells, Singapore's Esplanade Theatre, Montreal's Place des Arts and Cape Town's Artscape, winning five-star praise from audiences and critics alike.

Their world tours have earned them an unrivalled reputation for pushing the boundaries in the genre of ice dance with their skill and athleticism on the ice, their creative and powerful story-telling, their sumptuous sets, spectacular special effects and opulent costumes.

Whether you've seen The Imperial Ice Stars' Swan Lake on Ice before or have yet to experience the thrill of world-class ice skating in the intimacy of the theatre, this dramatic new ice interpretation of one of the most popular ballets will have you on the very edge of your seat. Tickets may still be available from [The Playhouse](#).

So how do they make the ice? Well, turning a theatre stage into a temporary ice rink is no easy task...

A question that is often asked is whether the rink is actually made of real ice? Be assured it is! In fact there are approximately 14 tonnes of it on the stage and, hidden beneath the surface, over 10 miles of pipe work and a few buckets of sweat, all at a working temperature of minus 15 degrees.

A strict timetable needs to be followed in order for the ice rink to be ready in time for rehearsal skating at 5:00pm on our Tuesday opening night. Work starts every Monday morning at 7:00am when our technicians arrive at the venue and start unloading our two 45ft trucks with the help of eighteen theatre technicians. The trucks carry not only the ice rink, but also the costumes, sets, sound and lighting equipment for the show.

The work on piecing the rink together starts with the base and sides of the rink, which is made of marine reinforced plywood and waterproof timber for the edging. We now have what looks like a giant baking tray into which we will lay our pastry; only our pastry is a 52ft x 52ft heavy-duty pool liner. The most awkward section of the work begins, as the 10 miles of pipes mentioned earlier are now laid inside the tray and connected to the header pipes before being spaced out across the base of the tray and secured. The spacing is incredibly important and must be exact. If not, sections of the rink will not freeze and we would have some very unhappy and angry Russian skaters!

After everything is connected on the stage, we then connect the header pipes to our chiller units outside the theatre and start to fill the system with a mixture of glycol (antifreeze) and water. Once this is circulating throughout the pipes we turn the chillers down to a temperature of minus 15 degrees. The outside of the pipes will frost over and at this point we pop down to the local fish market and buy four tonnes of crushed ice, which we spread over the pipes. This basically gives us a head start in the ice making process. The time now has usually reached 6:00pm on the Monday evening.

Overnight and throughout Tuesday, the rink is sprayed carefully every 15 minutes until it is approximately three inches thick. This will take until about 3:00pm in the afternoon, when final dressings are given to the top of the ice surface so that it is perfectly smooth for the rehearsal and performance, some 34 hours after work began.

While the spraying is taking place, our technicians are also working on getting the sets, lighting and sound in place, and our wardrobe managers are taking care of the more than 110 costumes, which will be used during our performance of the show.

Once the rink is completed, the surface temperature is constantly monitored day and night throughout our stay at the theatre. In addition to this, during the interval and after each performance of the show, the surface is scraped and resurfaced with hot water to keep it as smooth as possible.

And here to prove they know what they are doing is the video....