

# ARTISTIC SKATING

## **NEW SHOW SKATING JUDGING GUIDELINES**

-2009-

This document "New Show Skating Guidelines" has been produced, by The Show and Precision Skating Sub Committee in collaboration with S.I.PaR. and C.T.A., to develop SHOW SKATING and help good skaters to improve both technically and artistically.

This document is intended to underline and clarify those items which enable the judges to compile their A and B scores during SHOW competitions. The first aim is to simplify the interpretation and to examine the important features of the two scores more closely; the second is to explain those aspects of Show Programmes which are difficult to understand and to judge, so that trainers, skaters and judges will all "speak the same language".

Clearly this paper cannot cover every choreographic aspect which might arise in a competition. It is intended to be a first attempt at clarification which can be revisited and expanded in future.

## The principles involved in judging Show Skating

### A) PROGRAMME CONTENTS

- 1) **Technical Difficulties:** skating skills, steps, speed, lifts, jumps and spins
- 2) **The THEME of the programme and its design:** its composition and programme style, technical structure of the programme, its use of space, the use of skating elements and their variety, compatibility, coherence and unity, originality, rhythm and its variation.
- 3) **Group Technique:** group manouvres, formations, blocks, ranks, changes and transitions, intersections, harmony of movement in unison.

### B) PRESENTATION

- 1) **Expressiveness and Interpretation:** artistic and kinesthetic ability, quality and control of movements, the varied use of energy, theatricality.
- 2) **The accomplishment of the Theme:** costumes, make-up, hairstyles and props. The effectiveness of the performance; The involvement of the skaters in the programme, its projection to the judges and the public.
- 3) **General Impression:** precision, harmony, synchronization and rhythmic flow.

# JUDGING PRINCIPLES

## THE "A" MARK – CONTENTS OF PROGRAMME

### 1. TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

The difficulty of a programme depends on the skating skills, the footwork, the edges, the choreographic movements of arms, chest, head, whole body, on the position of the skaters on the rink, as well as on speed, rhythm, jumps and spins (when allowed).

Demonstrating stability and quality of skating through the control of the skates is very important, cleaning and fluid edges, steps, and revolutions, demonstrate the level of technical mastery and ability. The skaters must be able to skate in all directions, forward, backward, clockwise and anti-clockwise. The variety and the difficulty of steps increases the value of technical content as will the use of accelerations and variations of speed.

- **Skating Skill**

In Show Skating the way in which the skaters skate is very important. Every skater must be able to skate fluently and with grace. The group has to demonstrate good skate control, i.e. that all skaters are able to skate with ability and fluency, without falls or hesitations and with no bad/ugly body positions.

- **Edges and footwork**

Steps are a very important technical element in a Show Programme. They should be varied and they need **to express the character of the music**. They should be skated with elegance and fluency, and should be quick and deep edged.

A group should not use difficult steps if the skaters are not good at performing them correctly. It is better to use a simpler steps which everybody can perform well in order to make the programme fluent.

- **Speed**

Speed has two aspects:

- a. Speed as **linear skating speed** (moving across the floor). A fast group will always be spectacular to watch especially when it is able to perform difficult steps, crosses, and particular movements, performed at high speed.
- b. Speed as **rapidity in** steps execution, movements, transitions from one position to another (see Group Technique).

- **Lifts: Figures and Artistic Positions**

Lifts and Figures are used to express particular moments of the programme or to emphasize a music beat or to communicate in a creative way, the meaning of the programme. However, the way they are presented must always match the chosen theme and the character of the music, they have to be performed without lengthy preparations and with confidence.

Lifts should be performed in classic fashion (smoothly – both the lifter and the one lifted), as in pairs or dance movements, while figures are those movements that groups of skaters or even the entire group perform in standing positions or in group of three, or four, etc. skaters.

In general it is better to avoid dangerous lifts or artistic positions in which lifters or lifted skaters can risk their safety. For limitations in each category please refer to the Rule Book.

- **Jumps and Spins**

Where allowed, Jumps and Spins should not be judged as technical elements as in Free or Pairs Skating, but only as choreographic elements. These elements do not have a major importance which is why they cannot determine the placements. However they can be well judged if performed in an original way or in a particular moment of the programme so as to enhance or characterize a moment of the choreography or of the music. If they are performed they have to be fluent, clean, correct, fast, high and if performed by more skaters, they must be performed close or in synchrony. In Quartets jumps and spins can be executed in pairs, but skaters must not use them to disguise technical problems. Their purpose should be to enhance and underline particular moment of the programme in an original manner. Besides, it is important to emphasise that the choreographic construction of Quartets and of course even in the other Show Disciplines, should take into account not only the ability of skaters to move in unison but also the variety of formations, steps and changes of direction on the rink, so as to

avoid watching a programme executed by “individuals” skating a programme in formation.

It is important to *keep in mind that Show Skating is a **special aspect of Artistic Skating**, which is why skaters **MUST** know how **to skate properly**.*

*The more difficult the steps, movements and figures presented and the more easily and fluently they are performed, the higher the credit for the group should be.*

*Steps, movements, figures and choreographic movements can be executed in a **standing position and/or toe stops**, to create original movements of the arms, legs or head or to enhance a particular moment of the programme. The use of too many standing positions, toe-stops or repetitions of these positions, is not good. A programme cannot be a high level programme if it includes too many steps and movements, even if technically difficult, performed in standing positions. The group **MUST** demonstrate that they know how to skate. **Stationary movements can be presented only to emphasize a particular moment of the programme.***

*Each unnecessary stop will reduce the value of the programme.*

## 2. THE THEME AND ITS DESIGN

The construction of the programme includes: the theme and its composition, the style of the programme, its technical structure, the use of space, the positioning of the structural elements, and their variety, the unity, compatibility and consistency of the elements, originality, their pace and its variations.

- **The Theme, its composition and programme style**

The Theme is the first recognizable element in a show group programme and it is characterized by its intent and by what it wants to communicate. It is accomplished through its creative composition: the start, the way it develops, its variations and the way it ends, through a specific number of parts (sub-themes) in a specific coherent order. This must be expressed through the choice of a particular expressive form e.g. classic dance, modern, contemporary, musical, ethnic etc. etc. and/or a combination of these. The programme must represent the artistic and formal intention of the Theme. There are two kinds of THEME: Concrete or Abstract. A "Concrete" idea mirrors a story, an event, an historical moment etc. An "Abstract" idea is when through choreography the aim is to communicate a feeling, a sensation, an emotion. There must be a recognizable thread running through the whole programme: title, music, steps, movements, gestures, the expressiveness, the costumes, make-up, hair styles, and accessories must all contribute to emphasize the meaning of the choreography.

Judging the THEME, especially an abstract one, is not easy because judging it properly sometimes depends on the culture, knowledge and sensitivities of the individual judge; the theme **MUST** be judged **objectively**. It might be useful for judges to consider how to evaluate unusual and difficult themes. Nevertheless, sometimes, easy and ordinary themes can be accomplished in a brilliant way.

- **The Technical Structure of the programme**

By the structure of the programme is meant its construction, steps architecture, movements, formations and their interactions according to the principles of proportion, unity, space, form, structure and phrasing. There must be balance between the different parts and sections of the choreography in accordance with the aesthetic principle of the composition. The structure of the programme is the writing of the program choreography both from the technical and artistic point of view.

- **Use of space, the positioning of the elements and variety**

The spatial positioning and the variety of the patterns, their directions, their movements and their changes of movements must be designed to communicate clearly to every corner of the rink. When constructing a show programme, particular attention should be paid to the use of the rink. A programme MUST cover the whole rink floor and the skaters MUST move in all the directions following different imaginary lines. The elements should be distributed all over the rink and not just in one part of it. The use of the floor should take into account the utilization of the space three dimensionally. Skaters must know how to move the whole body so as to fill the space around them.

The technical elements should be arranged so that the programme becomes a continuous flow of elements following the same logic, to make the programme a complete opera with a meaning and with its own history. The construction of the programme, the disposition of the elements, its "architecture", must be designed keeping in mind what is intended to be expressed, with full regard to the music chosen. The sequences of the elements must be logically linked together. It must be designed around movements, gestures, and positions not merely for "effect", but motivated by the music itself and respecting its rhythm and features. The elements presented in a Show Programme have to be in equal quantities - steps, movements, figures, and changes of direction. The Programme scheme must be varied, not repetitive and rich in content. There should be harmony between the various parts of the programme: there should be harmony but they should contrast in character at the same time.

During the programme only (steps, formations and positions) repetitions should be avoided. The repetition of some movements will only be accepted if the choreography requires it (for example in a dance such as the Charleston where typical movements can be repeated), or if starting from a basic step the group then executes different variations (for example BOLERO).

- **Homogeneity, consistency and unity**

Compatibility, coherence and the unity of the elements of the choreography, are performed through consistency and coherence of movements, steps and structure. All the elements must be consistent with the music. Both the small and large sections must reflect an overall vision of the choreographic work in order to give a meaning to the entire

composition. All the technical elements must be merged in order to have a continuous flow. The elements must follow a logic, they have to have a precise meaning, in order to have a consistent programme with its meaning, its story and its pattern. The construction of the programme, i.e. the positioning of the elements, its "architecture", must be designed on what it is supposed to express and on the music chosen. The sequence of the elements must have a logic. Movements, positions, gestures, should not be just for effect. They have to be motivated by the music itself, according its characteristics and its rhythm . When looking at a Show Group programme what we should be looking for is not merely a group of skaters skating together, but a group skating as one person or at least where the relationship between skaters is clear. It would be a mistake to depend on just a few good skaters using the others merely as walk-ons. Skaters can perform movements and interpret themes of music altogether or in small groups or even individually when the choreography requires it. The important thing is that all the movements, all the interpretations, should give the impression of a **Compact Group**.

This depends mostly on the interpretive and technical level of the skaters , the work of the Group and the design of the programme.

- **Originality**

From a theoretical point of view, originality means the ability to do something new, or in a new way. In technical terms when applied to roller skating programme originality is obtained through **characteristic skating elements**, that is with **unusual** steps, movements and patterns. **THAT IS ORIGINAL**. Originality is NOT just creating new steps, new movements, but adopting **new styles**. Put a programme onto the rink in an innovative and creative way. Actual fragments of musicals, ballets or other show performances which are already well known ("Swan lake" for example) can be interpreted and presented in a new form or in the classic ballet style. Of course, being open to other artistic disciplines, can impart a deeper artistic sensibility. Originality should also be demonstrated in the **programme structure**.

- **Rhythm and its variation**

Using the time and rhythm with variety and contrast, is the ability to use the time and the varying rhythms of the music in different ways during the programme in order to underline the important parts of the music such as the melody, its color and its form. This is the ability to underline the music and to produce subtle variations of intensity, timing and dynamic to the musical composition.

**Timing** is the basic beat of the music which determines the speed of the piece or its slowness (Metronome).

**Melody** is the linear structure which, by using the height and intensity of the different notes, forms the exterior contour of the musical phrase. Its major influence is on the emotions and psychology.

The note's length and shortness, produces the **rhythm** that scatters the melody into impulses. The rhythm has a big influence on the body. It is line and fragmentaed, and is closely connected to the energy of the piece.

**Harmony** is the simultaneous relationship between sounds, resulting in, the variation of tones, colours and interior responses. Together with rhythm, it has a lot of influence on muscular activity and nervous energy and therefore stimulates physical movement.

**Phrasing.** A choreographic phrase, is a period made up of a group of movements.

### **3. GROUP TECHNIQUE**

In Show Skating **the group** is very important so **skating in group** is a determinant feature. It is very important to remember that the rules do not allow any skater in a standing position "as scene a prop" for a long period during a programme.

Group Technique is the ability of the group of skaters, to move in different formations as lines, curves, diagonals, zig-zags, serpentines etc., and to move into yet other different kinds of formation such as lines, circles, pyramids, etc, in complete ranks, and/or - broken and/or divided – and/or combined ranks (e.g. duets, trios, quartets, quintets etc.) and to move into different kind of interactions (mirror, parallel-contrasting-sequential lines, crosses, canon-rondeau-antiphon-unison counterpoint, etc.) in accordante with the structure of the programme.

Some examples from music and dance:

- **Counterpoint** is the simultaneous combination of two or more themes that are independent in contour and rhythm and are harmonically interdependent.
- **Canon** is a composition which combines one melody with one or more imitations which gradually overlay the original. The original theme is known as the "antecedent", those which follow are known as subsequent.

- In **Rondeau**, a principal theme (sometimes called the "refrain") alternates with one or more contrasting themes, (like in a school song/round such as "Frere Jacques"), generally called "episodes," but also occasionally referred to as "digressions," or "couplets". Possible patterns in the Classical Period include: ABA, ABACA, or ABACAD'A.
- **Antiphon** or "call and response" is a choreographic and musical type where the major theme is executed by one or more skaters while the rest looking or listening. Then the group standing repeats the movement exactly the same as executed before by the skater or the group of skaters.

In summary, group technique is the ability to create, vary and modify different successive formations with order, speed, fluidity and precision and to execute movements and changes of position on the rink, without apparent effort or tangles (transitions). Skating in a straight line is the easiest way to get a group moving on the rink. Skaters must demonstrate their ability to skate both forward and backward, in a straight line, curve etc, or in block, with intersections or in any other way, always fluently, without falls or hesitations, without looking at one another in order to avoid collisions or to correct their positions.

It is important to add that if the group contains a large number of skaters elements such as blocks or lines can be used more frequently to help the group to move together both in formation and synchronously.

**In solving the problems of alignment and distance of skaters it is important to remember that while "show" is not "precision skating", a way does need to be found to maintain order, precision, and synchronism in the group.**

## **THE "B" MARK – PRESENTATION**

With the B mark, the judges have to mark the ability of the group to do "**Show Skating**". The score for "presentation" is not based merely on an "impression" or the sensitivities of who watches or judges, but represents the sum of various artistic aspects all of the same importance. All the scoring principles for the B score must take into account the group performance in executing the programme.

## 1. EXPRESSIVENESS AND INTERPRETATION

“Body language” is the ability to express a specific emotion through gestures, mimicry and various postures or through use of the whole body, (i.e. no verbal language is used to transmit the feeling.) Corporal Expression, to be complete, must include not just body attitudes, but also facial expressions which clearly can contribute to the expression of a particular emotion.

Both individually and as a group the skaters must be able to esprese themselves through the body in a complete, uniform and homogeneous way. The quality and timing of gestures and movements as well as the ability to interpret the chosen theme with facial expressions, are very important points by which the judges may evaluate the artistic level of the group and its quality.

The fundamental elements of Expressiveness and interpretation fundamental elements are:

- *Carriage.*
- *Port de bras (correct arms setting).*
- *Total utilization of the different part of the body.*
- *Perfect lines.*
- *Quality, clarity and precision of movement.*
- *Variety and Contrast.*
- *Gracefulness, Fineness, elegance and smooth control of movements.*
- *Fluidity, seamlessness in changing movements.*
- *Energy and its variations and shades (A sequence of movements has a precise energy that has a beginning, then grows and finishes and flows natuarlly into the next choreographic phrases) e.g.: weak, strong, light, dry, soft, explosive, percussive, pulsing, rising and falling, sharp, accelerated, decelerating, slow, etc.*
- *Artistic, ability to mimic and interpret (theatricality).*

## 2. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE THEME

The theme; the original concept; the intention of the choreography; how to translate all of this onto the rink; and all the ability of the skaters to interpret the style and the character of the programme, appropriately to the music and fulfilling the intent of the preselected theme; all these have to be borne in mind at all times.

Costumes, make-up, hairstyles, and props are very important in defining the theme and the message of the programme. They contribute in strengthening the communicative and artistic part of the theme. For this reason they have to be used carefully paying close attention to detail both from an artistic and historical point of view. Elaborate costumes and/or props, with skaters demonstrating their ability to use them with confidence and dexterity can earn a higher credit for difficulty. Changes of costumes during the performance, must be performed tidily and rapidly so as not to interrupt the fluency of the programme. Remember too, the rules restricting the use of "Free Standing" scenery and objects not used by skaters.

It is vital that the emotional, physical and intellectual involvement of the skaters is projected across to judges and the public alike.

### **3.GENERAL IMPRESSION**

- **Accuracy and synchronism**

Judges will consider, both the expression of the idea and the clarity, precision, finesse and care of the programme. They have to pay attention to alignment and synchronism where requested. The group must demonstrate self-confidence and control, giving an impression of order and attention to detail. Falls, hesitations, stops etc, will considerably reduce the B mark. Change of costumes and props should be made without stops or hesitations in the flow of the programme.

- **Harmony and rhythmic ability**

Not only do the movements have to be in time with the music, but every movement, whether individual or group must be in harmony with the music. Skaters must express the music by use of appropriate movements of the body, head, arms, legs, with particular movements of the whole group.

Movements, gestures, steps, should match the character of the melody, the harmony, rhythm, time, dynamics and emotion of the music and not just casually or with no involvement. The style of the programme must express and underline the character of the music and the skaters must be able to be always keep in time and follow the rhythmic variations correctly.

## Suggestions for trainers

The value of everyday training sessions can be much improved merely by studying some simple rules choreographic creativity.

It is perfectly possible to become a decent professional just through knowing the basics of choreography, but it is also important to have a good technical and musical background, plus culture and good taste.

There are no absolute rules when talking about creativity; we can simply analyze the elements available to us to stimulate the creativity and to define some basic rules when composing a programme.

Let's remember that:

1. At present, many movements are weak and not incisive enough.
2. Choreographies are always too long. We need to pay attention to the dynamics of the sequences in order that the result is not boring repetition. (So we need to pay attention to the overall rhythm of the programme).
3. A good and interesting start is a good judging point, but remember that a good finish can affect about 40% of the total mark. In any case, the whole programme should be supported by a varied and interesting technical and choreographic structure.
4. Monotony is fatal. Search for contrasts. Search for variety.
5. Don't be a slave to the music, but don't murder it either.
6. When you start, as trainer, don't do over-complicated things. Keep it simple.
7. If what you are working on doesn't "feel" right and is not satisfying you, don't be afraid to bin it and start over.
8. Be honest with yourself and the way you feel. Don't follow trends just because other people do.

## Suggestions for judges

Though a show group programme must be judged from different points of views: form, structure, composition and execution, clearly emotional involvement is also very important.

Here below are some questions a judge (or a trainer) might ask him/herself during a competition. These questions might be a useful aid in the evaluation of a show group programme.

1. What kind of programme was it? (Dramatic, comic, narrative, abstract, etc.)
2. Did the programme expressed an idea, an emotion or a precise meaning?
3. Was the choreography easy to follow? Was the idea logical and easy to understand or were there too many confusing changes?
4. What kind of style was it? (Classic, folk, musical, contemporary, etc)
5. Was the choreography chosen consistent with the theme?
6. Did the style have its own specific language? Or it was a dry cliché, copy of something?
7. Was it clear the way the skaters performed the style of the programme?
8. Were the costumes appropriate to the idea and to the style of the programme?
9. Was the make up applied well?
10. Were the props really useful to the idea?
11. Have props been used correctly and is their use justified?
12. Was the programme too easy?
13. Did the design of the programme have unity and rhythmic variety?
14. Did the choreography match the formal structure of the music?
15. Was the chosen music suitable to the programme presented?
16. Were the music selections well cut and coherent with the choreography?
17. Did the lines and forms created make the programme interesting?
18. Were there some surprising elements or everything was taken for granted?
19. Did the programme have a peak or were several important moments? Were all these moments important? Or were they forced?
20. Was the choreography continuous? Did it keep the interest up or were some of the

parts weak?

21. Were there parts in the programme objectively too long and some others too short?
22. Were the different parts of the programme (or choreographic actions) varied, interesting and coordinated (were there enough dynamic variations)?
23. Were the spaces between and the positioning of the elements well balanced?
24. Were the spatial relationships between skaters well structured?
25. Was the synchronization of movements clear and precise?
26. Were the movements chosen with care and did they fit the idea?
27. Was the finale clear or confusing?
28. Did the technical skills of the skaters improve the value of the programme? Or did they weaken it?
29. Did the skaters performance enriched the composition of the programme by communicating their emotions to the audience?

## EVALUATION SUMMARY

Mark A PROGRAMME CONTENTS		Mark B PRESENTATION	
To Consider:		To Consider:	
1) TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES		1) Expressiveness and Interpretation	
Skating skills	Stability, quality, fluidity, control, clockwise and anticlockwise	<b>Artistic ability (kinesthetic)</b>	Group and individual expression
Steps	Difficulty, agility. Edges clear and deep	<b>Quality</b>	Carriage, port de bras, total utilization of different parts of the body, perfect lines, movements quality, fluidity
Speed	Linear speed and rapid execution of steps	<b>Energy and its variations</b>	Utilization of different degrees of Energy (weak, strong, light, dry, soft, explosive, percussive, pulsing, sharp, accelerated, slow, etc.)
Lifts	Moving and/or stationary lifts	<b>Theatricality</b>	Artistic, interpretative and mimicry ability
Jumps and Spins	Where allowed		
2) IDEA AND ITS DESIGN		2) THE EXECUTION OF THE THEME	
Idea/theme	Clarity of intent (concrete or abstract)	<b>Costumes, make-up, hairstyles, props</b>	Do they fit this Theme? Were they used smoothly and properly?
Composition	Start, development, variations and conclusion (themes and subthemes) – choreography	<b>Performance execution</b>	Quality of Programme execution
Programme style	Style definition (classic, modern, contemporary, ethnic, musical etc.)	<b>Involvement in the programme</b>	Emotional involvement in the programme
Utilization of space elements displacement and variety	Spatial distribution of the elements, patterns, directions and variety of changes	<b>Projection to the judges and public</b>	Ability in making judges and spectators part of the programme
Homogeneity coherence and unity	Complete vision and coherence of the elements	3) GENERAL IMPRESSION	
Originality	Steps, movements, lifts, constructions and new styles	<b>Precision</b>	Precision, care of alignment and spacing, synchronism
Rhythm and its variations	Timing, rhythmic variations, dynamics, melody, harmony, phrasing	<b>Harmony</b>	Global harmony of the programme
3) GROUP TECHNIQUE		<b>Rhythmic ability</b>	Correct timing and rhythmic variations
Group manouvres	Use of lines, curves, diagonals, zig-zag, serpentine, etc.		
Formations	Quality of formations : line, circle, pyramid, rank, blocks, duets, trios, quartets, quintets etc. when used.		
Interactions types	Quality of execution, togetherness, parallel interactions, mirror interactions, counterpoint, canon, Rondeau, antiphon, crosses etc. when used		
Transactions	Formations variety, orderly changes clean and fast execution		

## ***Conclusions***

In Show Skating the technical abilities of the skaters and their artistic and expressive skills are brought to maximum levels. The result of this is a mixture of sport and art. That's what should be considered while judging a show programme, and because it is a sport, all the elements that make artistic skating a sports discipline must be considered.

## **Aknowledgments**

This guide is the result of the work of the *Italian Show Committee*:

***Sandro Guerra, Katia Sessegolo, Damiano De Felice, Massimo Carraro, Roberto Callegher.***

Special Thanks to Sandro Guerra that made this possible.

Special thanks also for her suggestions to **Mrs Margaret Brooks** (CIPA Vice-President, CEPA President)

*Translation provided by **Nicola Genchi** (CIPA member) with the kind help of **Mr Peter Brooks***