

Skater's Disney dream comes full circle

Performs at ACC over March Break

By Herb Garbutt
METROLAND WEST
MEDIA GROUP

Danielle Clarke has dreamed about skating in a Disney ice show since she was six years old — so there aren't many days she needs to find a reason to perform.

Even with a schedule that sees them putting on as many as 10 shows over five days before packing up and moving on to the next city, if the desire wanes in the slightest, the 19-year-old Miltonian quickly re-discovers it.

As an ensemble skater in Disney on Ice Worlds of Fantasy show, one of the Milton Skating Club graduate's duties is to host the pre-show — where kids get a peek backstage before the performers hit the ice.

It's that up-close connection with her audience that really inspires Clarke.

"As soon as they see the princesses, they get so excited," she

said from Auburn Hills, Michigan late last week, her latest stop on a two-year stint with the touring company.

"To see their faces and how excited they are, you realize what you're skating for. It really motivates you to do the show. It's so amazing to look into the audience and see the kids all excited because I used to be one of those kids."

It was Clarke's own experience seeing Beauty and the Beast at Maple Leaf Gardens that inspired her dream of one day making the jump from spectator to performer.

That journey will come full circle over the March Break, when the Disney show hits the ice at the Air Canada Centre (ACC).

Clarke started skating when she was four and enjoyed a successful career with her hometown club, competing at sectionals and winning a StarSkate provincial championship. Upon graduating from



FILE PHOTO BY GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

EAGER FOR HOMECOMING: Danielle Clarke looks forward to performing in front of family and friends when Disney on Ice hits Toronto.

Bishop Reding — like most of her classmates — she began making plans for the future, applying to McMaster University where she wanted to study biomedical engineering.

That's when her skating coach, Paul Fisher, mentioned that Disney on Ice was holding auditions. Clarke sent in an audition tape and

got a call for a tryout and soon after received word that she had been chosen. Clarke postponed her acceptance to university and joined the cast for six weeks of 10-hour days rehearsing before kicking off the tour in Lakeland, Florida at the end of August.

"I always wanted to travel and doing this, I have the option to

travel and to skate," said Clarke, who now rooms with Hamilton's Stephanie Kelser, who used to compete out of Burlington. "Overall it's been a great experience and I've learned a lot about myself and I've met so many people from around the world."

One of just five Canadians in the cast of 37 skaters, Clarke plays everything from an animal to a fairy in the production, which spans Disney movies such as Cars, the Little Mermaid, Tinker Bell and her personal favourite, the Lion King.

"I really like that one," said Clarke. "It's very dramatic and seeing the reaction from the crowd, you can tell they really like it too."

Clarke said because of the variety and the inclusion of the Lion King and Cars, "it's not just a girly show" but a performance that everyone can enjoy.

The show runs from March 18 to 22 at the ACC. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at (416) 870-8000.

For more information about the show, visit www.disneyonice.com.

March Break!

Events

Book your spots now!
Drop in spaces are limited due to prebooking!

Monday
March 16

Cartoon Bob!

2-4pm \$5/caricature

Great Deal! Have a caricature of you and your children to hang in your house or use as a greeting card.

Tuesday
March 17

Craft-daddle!

1-2pm \$12.50 (includes Play Pass)

Get your hands into making your own Play-Doh and get a free shape cutter!

Wednesday
March 18

Craft-daddle!

1-2pm \$12.50 (includes Play Pass)

Make a framed picture to hang in your room!

Friday
March 20

Craft-daddle!

1-2pm \$12.50 (includes Play Pass)

Fruit Loop jars! Explore crushing fruit loops, separating colors and layering into jars!

Craft-daddle!

We are now taking pre-registration for two 4-week programs, beginning on March 24, 2009 and March 25, 2009. Your child will explore a different theme each session by a song or story, an artsy craft and a game incorporating physical activity and imagination.

Recommended ages 3-6years Cost: \$60+gst Time: 10:00-11:30am Dates: Tuesdays, March 24, 31, April 7, and 14th or Wednesdays March 25, April 1, 8, and 15th. Preregister now as spaces are limited. Parents can participate with their child or they can drop their child off and return after the program ends at 11:30. Drop off children must be self-toileters, those who are not will require a parent/caregiver to stay for diapering.

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Easter Hours

Friday, April 10	9:30am-8:30pm
Saturday, April 11	9:30am-8:30pm
Sunday, April 12	9:30am-8:30pm
Monday, April 13	9:30am-5:30pm

Hours of Operation: Monday, Tuesday 9:30am to 5:30pm; Wednesday, to Sunday 9:30am - 8:30pm

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*Pay only \$4 per child after 4pm from Monday to Friday. Special DOES NOT include Saturday and Sunday.

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