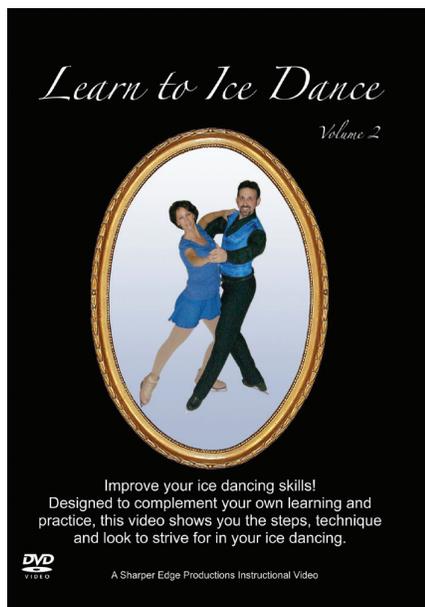


Learn to Ice Dance: Volume 2

iSKATE is dedicated to bringing the best product information to its readers, so when we heard about *Learn to Ice Dance: Volume 2*, we decided to give it a product trial to examine the marketing hype and establish whether this product really is as good as we are told.



In 2009, iSKATE reviewed the first DVD in the *Learn to Ice Dance* series. Produced by the American company Sharper Edge Productions and released in November 2007, this first DVD was created to fill the gap in the market for a professionally-produced instructional DVD for the lower level ice dances.

Most skaters are aware that the ISU provides DVDs, videos and notes to accompany the higher level dances, but nothing for the level that the largest sector of the ice dance community are performing on a daily basis. This first DVD covered dances for the American Preliminary test (Dutch Waltz, Canasta Tango and Rhythm Blues), the Pre-Bronze test (Swing Dance, Cha Cha – also known as the Canadian Cha Cha here in the UK, and Festival Tango). As these dances are also the main components of the British NISA test Levels 1, 2 and 4, iSKATE gave this DVD a definite seal of approval for providing a really useful tool that will assist a lot of skaters.

On the second DVD in this series, *Learn to Ice Dance: Volume 2*, US national gold medallists, Julie Keith and Mike Ricigliano, guide us through the next six ice dances in the US test structure. The DVD covers the US Bronze (Hickory Hoedown, Willow Waltz, Ten-Fox) and Pre-Silver (Fourteen step, Foxtrot, European Waltz) tests, along with a

bonus preview of the Tango, which will appear in the next DVD in the series.

In terms of the British tests that this is appropriate for, the DVD provides us with the compulsory (pattern) dances required in Level 5 (Willow Waltz and Fourteen Step) and Level 6 (European Waltz and Foxtrot). The Hickory Hoedown and the Ten-Fox are not tested in the British system, but are commonly performed in recreational dance clubs and coffee morning dance sessions.

The DVD is structured in the same way as the first in the *Learn to Ice Dance* series: the segment for each dance starts with a visual demonstration of the dance with a narrative about the character of the dance, its origin, the correct musical tempo, hints on musical interpretation and using moves to highlight the accents and articulation of the dance. This is followed by a breakdown of the dance with slow-motion video accompaniment to the narrative which draws out the key features of each step and identifies any optional holds or leg actions.

The steps, pattern, edges and timing are all discussed as an amalgam, working systematically through the dance to give the whole picture, as opposed to taking each factor in turn. This gives the dancer a good understanding of the important pieces of the dance as they happen and identifies the pairs and groups of features that need to work in a unified manner.

The slow-motion section also includes a narrative purely identifying the lady's steps, then the man's steps, which is particularly useful to those just learning any one of these dances and needing an aide memoire. The pattern of the dance is clearly displayed and each unit finishes with a competent demonstration of the dance, with lovely clear filming and excellent choice of angles to make sure of a good viewing perspective throughout.

It is hard to imagine an ice dancer who would not find this DVD useful. For those learning the dances covered in this DVD, this is the ideal way to refresh the steps and techniques between lessons. It would also help dance club skaters become confident in the techniques and even assist them learning the steps of some of the staple lower level dances.

For solo dancers, this DVD would be a useful tool to assist in understanding the partnering, which is clearly explained and demonstrated, including changes of hold and tracking. Thus, the solo dancer could get a good idea of how this dance would work as a couple. Coaches could really benefit from the technique tips in the DVD, as these highlight what produces a dance of test-pass quality.

Comparing the performance of a skater being considered for their test, with the demonstrations and common error descriptions on the DVD, would quickly identify any areas of weakness the coach should be addressing before entering the test papers. As in the first DVD, the music is not what we currently use in British ice dance, mainly relying upon American dance music. However, by this standard, the dancer should be easily able to identify the tempo of the music and should not be distracted by different orchestrations.

Overall, this is a superb DVD. It has a first-rate narrative, clear filming and a beneficial selection of the key points within each dance, which any ice dancer would find invaluable. *Learn to Ice Dance* does far more than fill a gap in the market for a lower level dance instructional DVD. It provides us with an excellently produced, very functional tool to improve our knowledge and technique in the lower level dances. If I could ask for anything, it would be that Sharper Edge Productions produced a downloadable version of this DVD, that could be loaded on to an iPhone or other smart phone and taken to the rink!

The 'Learn to Ice Dance' series is all-region playable in the NTSC format. Each volume is available individually from www.icedancers.com priced at \$39.95 plus \$7.95 shipping and handling to the UK, or \$69.95 plus \$10.95 for both. Please contact Sharper Edge Productions for shipping discounts on bulk purchases.

Sample videos can be viewed online at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/SharperEdgeProd>.