

Aaron Champlain in Disney on Ice

By Constance Scrafield

Aaron Champlain, born and raised just outside Orangeville, has been away for some time, skating with Disney on Ice all across the U.S.A.

He is very thrilled to be doing so and he is also quite excited to be coming home to perform in Disney on Ice at the Rogers Centre in Toronto, Dec. 23 to Jan. 1.

Earlier this month, he told us in a telephone interview that he was in Mississippi with the show.

"In two weeks, we'll be in Toronto," he told us, obviously happy about the idea of skating in his home city and being with his family again.

Ice skating has always been a big interest to Champlain.

"It was always in my family," he said. "We loved watching it and I took lessons from about age eight to 13."

By then, he was ready to skate competitively, which he did until he was 21.

Although he was home schooled, Champlain began his high school years at Orangeville District Secondary School.

As he told us, by high school, "I was very good at my skating."

Added to this passion for skating, his "obsession with Disney," and one can see how pleased he is to be involved with both.

"All the characters are in the show: Goofy, Mickey, there are nine Princesses and one Queen; there's Snow Prince, Aladdin " it's really good for the whole family " Prince Philip fights a dragon!"

Champlain's fortuitous introduction to Disney on Ice happened, as many of these stories do, serendipitously.

"Friends that I trained with emailed, recommending me, to Judy Thomas, the casting director at Disney," he explained. "I went for an audition in Ottawa. That was two years ago, in February, 2015. I was offered a part " my first part was ensemble " get there first with a little bit of everything. It was really fun."

Still competing, Champlain had another opportunity and Disney was on board.

"I had the opportunity to compete internationally with a partner, representing Kazakhstan," he said. "We competed in Canada; I got to go to my last competition in Estonia. It was very pretty, very different."

He had praise for Disney: "They were totally understanding."

As a result, Champlain finally officially joined Disney in 2016, and is now travelling with the company.

"This year just lucked out," he said. "I'll have a few days at home. I'll commute for a few days and then, stay in Toronto while we do the show."

The Disney on Ice show at the Rogers Centre is called Dream Big and tells all the mini versions of the nine Disney Princesses from over the many years of Disney films, from Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty all the way up to Disney's Frozen. This is an ice show, so, naturally, there will be high flying jumps, and acrobatics of the pirates in the Little Mermaid part are "very unique" and will shake you to believe.

The loveable comic characters that always appear in the Disney films are part of the show and a Queen to rule them all. Everything, all the tremendous stories of magic and bravery of each of the Princesses, will delight and dazzle all the members of your family.

Champlain made the size of the show clear to us.

"There's about 40 main characters and with the extras, and the crew, there are about 100 of us involved in the program."

What does he love the most about what he is doing, we put it to him.

"Getting to do what I love every day," he said. "I fell in love with Disney " it was such a part of my childhood. Why Disney? It is so motivational and so fun. Brought my family together; it was television comfort food."

He talked about other young people, other kids aspiring to skate as a career.

"It's great for me," he said simply. "I love working with kids, getting to see their faces when their favourite character comes on.

"I would encourage them to keep going as long as they love it (skating). If you keep loving skating with your whole heart; but if you start to loose your passion " look for other things that inspire you. This is a lot of work " living on the road " a different hotel every week " away from your family."

"You have to really love it," he added. "And I do."

Disney on Ice " Dream Big is on at the Rogers Centre, in Toronto from Dec. 23 to Jan. 1. Check with the Rogers Centre for information and tickets.