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## NEWS

### Rippon to get romantic in upcoming season

Rising star opts for more mature programs

By Sarah S. Brannen, special to icenetwork.com

(06/28/2010) - Before **Adam Rippon** left for the world championships last March, he had a chat on the phone with **Ashley Wagner**. She told him that the one thing she regretted about her first world championship experience was that she didn't enjoy herself.

"I knew no one would be expecting anything from me because I was the second alternate, so I just focused on doing a good job," Rippon said in a telephone interview this past weekend. "It wasn't perfect, but I felt really comfortable skating, and it was great to have that experience, especially heading into the season after the Olympics, when it's a whole new four years."

"I'm happy with the season I had last year, but I know where I need to grow as a skater. I feel like the more experience you have the more it helps, although you don't want to believe that when you're inexperienced. [Choreographer] David [Wilson] always calls me 'Angel Boy,' but I want to come across on the ice like a more mature skater, and I want my programs to reflect that. Whatever music I chose, I wanted to be more mature."

Rippon, the 2010 Four Continents champion, has chosen two familiar and beloved pieces of music for his competitive programs next season. He, Wilson and Sébastien Britten's choreographed his new short program last week to Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*; he says the program is about ninety percent finished.

"It's kind of funny that we chose it," said Rippon. "Brian [Orser, Rippon's coach] had brought up the Prokofiev *Romeo and Juliet*, and I was like, 'This is cool; I'll put it in the maybe pile!' Like, maybe never."

After considering several music possibilities, one morning Wilson suggested Tchaikovsky's music for the doomed lovers, and it clicked. Wilson also suggested a collaboration with choreographer Sebastian Britten.

"Sebastian was my first client, when I was very young and started choreographing," Wilson said. "I've been looking for opportunities to collaborate, and Sebastian has been particularly inspired by Adam's skating. After worlds, Sebastian emailed me his impressions of Adam's performances, and it was extremely in-depth and profound, and it really touched me. I felt like, you know what, I want to bring my worlds together."

"I've never done a full-on character piece," Rippon said. "I'm going to do my best to be Romeo, so I'm going to die at the end. A short program goes by so quickly, but this piece has all the emotions of a long program. I hope everybody likes it. I think it will be a really special program."

In another departure, Rippon says his costume will be designed by fellow skater Molly Oberstar. "She's really into design, and I've always thought she dressed herself really appropriately. Stephanie Handler will make the costumes, but I'm giving the design part to Molly. I'm scared to see what it will look like, but I'm really excited."



Adam Rippon is ready to present himself as a more mature skater in his new programs. (Getty Images)

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Rippon said he chose the music for his long program, Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 2," partly because he knows it well. It's the first time he has ever chosen the music for a program, rather than a choreographer bringing something to him.

"It's a piece I love, and if I could only listen to one piece of music for the rest of my life I would never get sick of this piece," he said. "I loved my long program last season, but I felt a little disconnected from the music. I wish I had something I knew a little better."

"I felt this year that he is ready to take something really well-known, even if it's been done before, so he could make his mark by making it his own," Wilson said. "Last year his long was a little more personal. I felt like it was a developmental year; this year I feel like he's really going to make a breakthrough."

Rippon spoke of the music with passion and enthusiasm.

"Rachmaninoff was a mad scientist when it came to composing music. I can listen to the whole thing and I'm just on the edge of my seat listening to every second of it. I told David, 'There's no way we can make a four-and-a-half minute program out of this.'"

Rippon and Wilson choreographed the program about two weeks ago. "I'm doing my best to get used to it," Rippon said. "It feels like it's come together. I'm so happy with the choreography David has given me and so grateful because he's incredible, a genius. I only hope I can do it justice. I want everyone to go through the emotions with me when I'm out on the ice."

"He listens to the piece every day," added Wilson. "A lot of the parts we fell in love with were very similar. He's young, with a pure inspiration of what he loves, and this piece really speaks to him. There's something about his buttery style, his angelic quality, and the way he floats across the ice, that seems made for this piece. And on a deeper, personal level it seems made for him."

For the first time in Rippon's career, a quad is part of the jump layout of the long program.

"I'm working on it and I really think I can do it," he said.

He had considered putting a quad in last year but decided to concentrate on the triple Axel, which he had only started landing midway through the season before.

"After Four Continents I added the quad into the program, but as worlds got closer we decided to just keep doing what I'd been doing all season."

Rippon will debut at least one of the new programs at the Japan Open on October 2, before competing with them at Skate America and Skate Canada.

"My main goal is just to keep improving my skating and do my best and I can only hope that it will be enough to win," he added. "I'm just so grateful to have such a great training environment here, and the best coaches to help me skate my best. I hope that it's just not in my head that I've really made all these big strides forward. It's a constant battle with myself to keep improving. I hope to make a really big impression this year. I hope I can be really competitive with everybody."

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