One London Stage Show

The 1743 in London a performance was done using a brand-new invention to mimic ice skating on stage — the first recorded use of roller skates. That performance was followed in 1818 in Berlin, Germany with the production of *Der Maler oder die Wintervergn Ugunger* (*The Artist or Winter Pleasures*) a ballet. The following year in France a patent was issued for the first roller skates.

By 1857 London had its first roller skating k All of the early skates were of the in-line type. Then in 1863 the first “quad skates” with four wheels were invented that allowed for easier turning. The skates had two wheels in front and two in the back. Skating became a popular sporting activity for men and women. It was not long before roller skating became a sporting event for endurance in miles or days. Over time the endurance racing became a team sport.

By 1935 Chicago had the first Roller Derby rink and soon the teams were paired together on the same track. Then on November 19, 1948 the CBS T.V. network broadcast the first Roller Derby race between New York and Brooklyn teams. Most people did not own a T.V. at the time but spectators were able to watch the race in store display windows. The following year the sport had grown so much that 55,000 spectators filled Madison Square Gardens over five-days.

Roller skating had become part of the world culture. In the United States Hollywood made films with roller skates as early as 1913. Behind the Iron Curtain in 1977 the East Germans produced a film called *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* (*Die Zertanzten Schuhe*). The film industry has produce films with social commentary such as *Kansas City Bomber (*1972) and *Rollerball* (1975).

Roller skating has even made it into popular music. Malanie’s song *I’ve Got A Brand New Pair of Roller Skates,* tells the story of a young girl going by a boys house to see him and he never is home. And there is the song by Jim Croce about the *Roller Derby Queen.* How she is the meanest hunk of woman called Spike and he fell in love.

From that one performance in 1743 roller skating has become a popular activity for children and competition for dancing and sports. It has been suggested as a sport in the next Olympic Games. So the next time you see someone glide by you remember that activity was born on a stage in a play back in 1743 in London.