

THE GREAT INDEX TO FUN
FRIDAY 9/8/17

AN EDITION OF Star Advertiser

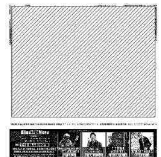
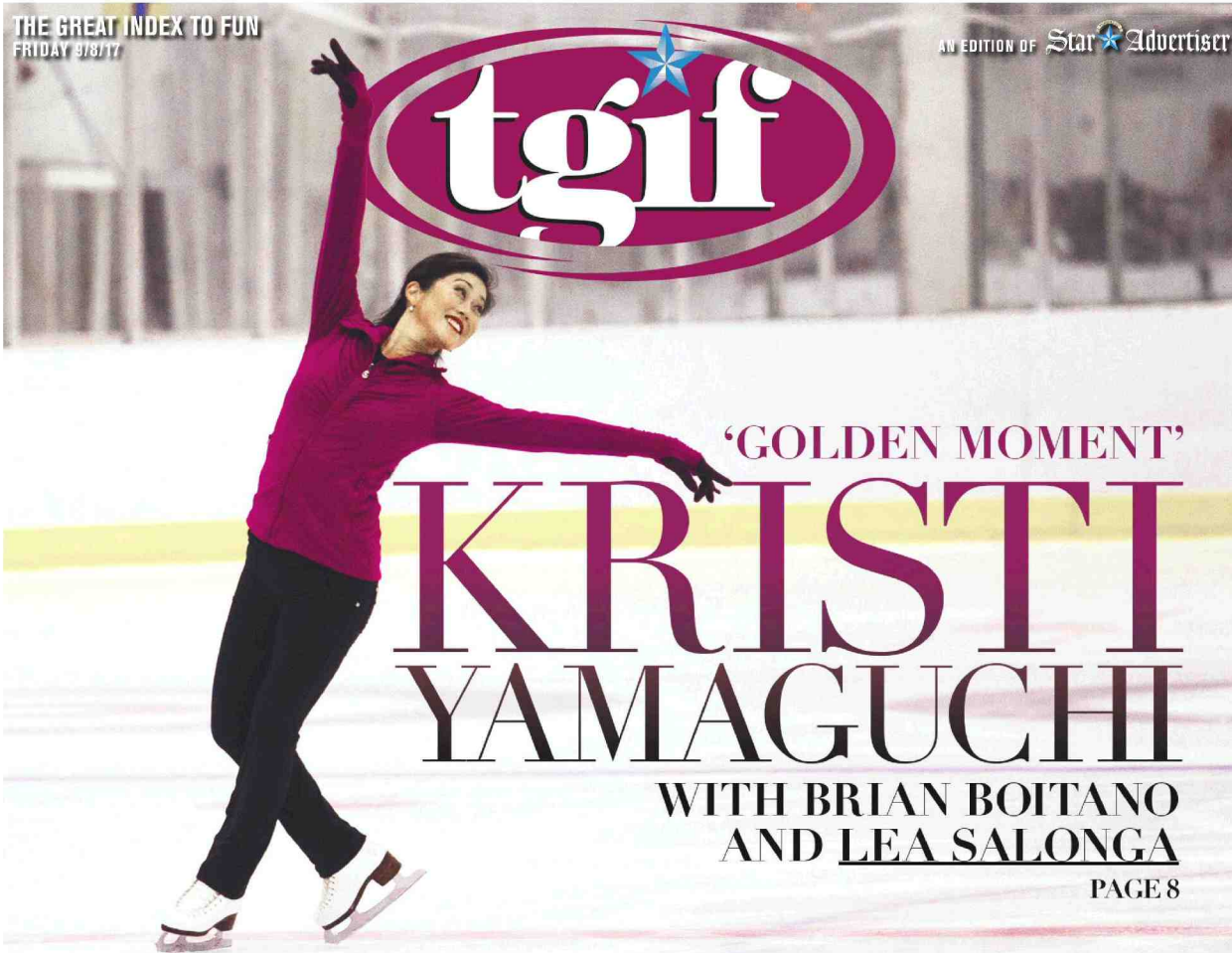
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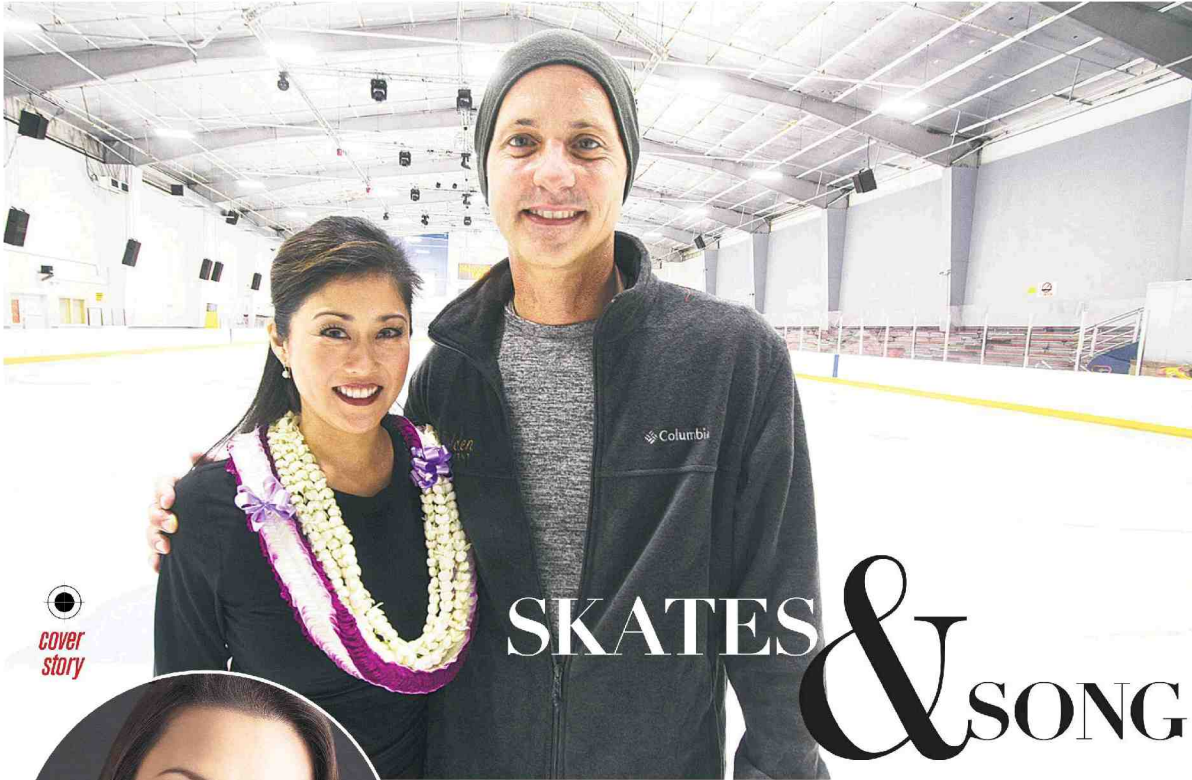
'GOLDEN MOMENT'

**KRISTI
YAMAGUCHI**

WITH BRIAN BOITANO
AND LEA SALONGA

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cover
story

SKATES & SONG

DENNIS ODA / 2015

Kristi Yamaguchi and Brian Boitano return to Hawaii to present "Kristi Yamaguchi's Golden Moment" at Blaisdell Arena. Singer Lea Salonga, at left, singing voice of two Disney princesses, will also be performing.

Lea Salonga joins Kristi Yamaguchi's star-studded fundraiser show for a pairing long in the making

figure skaters Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, 1984 Olympic medalists, without Ravel's "Bolero"? Or skating at ice rinks across the United States without the background of "Zorba the Greek"?

So it only seems fitting that Kristi Yamaguchi, the 1992 Olympic gold medalist and winner of the "Dancing With the Stars" competition in 2008, would want to perform to the

voice of Lea Salonga, the award-winning star of some of our recent decades' top musical productions on stage and screen, including the original London production of "Miss Saigon."

The two join forces in Yamaguchi's "Golden Moment," a skating show that returns to the Blaisdell Arena this weekend.

Salonga "was top of the list for us to try and invite," Yamaguchi

said in a call from the San Francisco Bay Area, where she was preparing for a performance in San Jose. "I've been a big fan of hers since the 'Miss Saigon' days — and her being the first Asian to win a Tony; there was just so much to identify with. I'm still pinching myself that I'm going to be performing to her voice live."

The feeling is mutual. Salonga has long enjoyed watching figure skating and recalls Yamagu-

'KRISTI YAMAGUCHI'S GOLDEN MOMENT'

WHERE:
Blaisdell Arena

WHEN:
7 p.m. Saturday,
4 p.m. Sunday

COST:
\$40-\$150

INFO:
ticketmaster.com or
800-745-3000



COURTESY LEA SALONGA

By Steven Mark
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Figure skating is the athletic activity most closely tied to music. Who can imagine



chi's "beautiful lines and beautiful execution."

"I remember watching both her U.S. Nationals when she won as well as her Olympic performance when she won," Salonga said, calling from the Philippines. "To be part of this is kind of mind-blowing because of who she is and who she's been able to gather to perform in Honolulu. It's going to be fun!"

Yamaguchi is coming here with Meryl Davis and Charlie White, 2014 gold medalists in ice dancing; Shizuka Arakawa, the 2006 gold medalist from Japan; Ekaterina Gordeeva, 1988 and 1994 pairs gold medalist; Japanese skaters Yuka Sato, world champion in 1994, and Daisuke Takahashi, world champion in 2010; and Americans Jeremy Abbott, four-time U.S. national champion between 2009 and 2014, and Ryan Bradley, 2011 U.S. national champ.

Brian Boitano, the 1988 Olympic champion, will co-host along with Yamaguchi and Carrie Ann Inaba from "Dancing With the Stars."

SALONGA, who rose to stardom with her performance in "Miss Saigon" after it opened in 1989 and came to New York with the production in 1991, will sing a few hit songs from Broadway, including "On My Own" and "I Dreamed a Dream" from "Les Misérables," as well as hits from the movies, including "Let It Go" from "Frozen."

All the tunes are right in her wheelhouse. She has performed in multiple productions of "Les Mis" on Broadway and London between 1993 and 2010, and appeared here in Hawaii as part of a touring production of the show in 1996. Salonga was also the singing voice of Mulan in "Mulan" (1998) and of Princess Jasmine in "Aladdin" (1992).

"It's not like a full-on concert, which is so demanding, so I can just turn my brain off and watch the perfor-

mances while I'm singing," Salonga said. "I know people's attention is going to be on the skaters, so I can turn my attention to the skaters as well and not worry too much."

Salonga has continued to win rave reviews for the purity of her voice and heart-felt delivery. Thanks to her constant work, her voice hasn't changed much from her days as a 17-year-old unknown from the Philippines who took the London audiences by storm with "Miss Saigon" in 1989. She remembers those days as feeling "like everything is a matter of life and death," whereas it was much easier when she returned to the show in later years.

She takes an occasional "trip back in time" these days, she said, watching videos taken from previous performances, which reveal a charming young woman speaking with a British accent.

"It's just a really infectious accent. When you hear it, you can't help but gravitate towards assimilating it for your own language, and then I moved to New York and that quickly went out the window," said Salonga with a laugh. She now speaks with a conventional American accent.

Salonga maintains a busy schedule, performing internationally and appearing as a coach on the Philippines' version of "The Voice." Last season she took a teenage classical singer, Mica Becerro, to the finals. "I think she's been able to get about 10 million views (on YouTube) now because she's just that good," said Salonga, who knelt before the girl in order to gain her favor.

YAMAGUCHI, of course, had her own experience with televised talent competitions when she won "Dancing With the Stars." She credits partner Mark Ballas, who was a trained musician and was able to get the band in synch with their dancing in a

short time. "He would say, 'Can you have the singers come in a little stronger here?'" she said. "It was an interesting process. You literally had one day and maybe one or two run-throughs with them until the next person had to come in and rehearse."

The skating shows here will raise funds for Yamaguchi's Always Dream Foundation, which focuses on early childhood literacy programs in Hawaii, California and Arizona. The "Golden Moment" event, here for two performances, comes to Hawaii after one show in San Jose, also a fundraiser.

Always Dream operates in seven schools on Oahu, reflecting Yamaguchi's strong attachment to Hawaii. Her grandfather immigrated to Hawaii from Japan, and she has visited nearly every year since she was a young adult.

Yamaguchi doesn't skate much these days except when she's preparing for a show, but she remembers the fun and the challenge of competitive skating.

"Learning the jumps and the more technical things, you get that exhilaration when you finally accomplish something, and then when you execute it during competition under pressure, it's a great feeling," she said. "There are equal 'downs,' too, when you fall or something. That's why we say there's a lot of tears and elation in skating."

Yamaguchi will appear on the ice, including skating during a song with her daughter, but said she will mostly concentrate on hosting duties.

With Salonga's contributions to the music, she's expecting an exciting show.

"It's always been a really perfect fit to have live music and skating, kind of creating a concert on ice," she said. "It's definitely more dynamic, and the energy level will be brought up just naturally because you have two performances going on at the same time."