

Moulin Rouge Audition Tips

BY LAUREN SANDERSON

The much-loved musical extravaganza *Moulin Rouge* is hosting auditions for dancers in New Zealand in July this year. Lauren Sanderson caught up with Associate Artistic Director Janet Pharoah to find out about the audition process, what she will be looking for and her tips for preparing for the big day.

Can you run us through the audition process for *Moulin Rouge*?

Initially, our Resident Choreographer, Erik Sorensen, will teach some short enchainments across the floor, each one showing different dance skills and styles, from classical technique to jazz and hip hop, along with high kicks and cartwheels. I will then make eliminations at times, by groups, and those that make it through to the second half of the audition will learn a longer routine to perform in small groups.

How long is the entire process?

It can be a long day depending on how many candidates are at the audition and the standard. Dancers who are still there at the end of the audition know they're in with a chance but won't know if they have a place until after all the year's auditions have been held. Because *Moulin Rouge* is a permanent show, the number of places available depends on who in the present cast is staying or moving on. All final candidates are kept on file and I make choices when a place becomes available, hoping that it matches up with their availability. It's important that candidates keep in touch with us as to their whereabouts and contact details. All candidates not in the final few will receive written notification.

Can anyone audition for *Moulin Rouge*?

We are unable to employ anyone under the age of 18 though I often have younger candidates auditioning, which I group together. Some do very well and go on the books to be re-contacted at a later date. If the audition is very full, I may have to send them away in order to concentrate on those candidates who are eligible. At the other end of the scale, there is no official age limit, it's about your capabilities, potential and how you look. To avoid disappointment, look at the criteria on the web site; we are

strict on the height requirements, and you do need to be a fully trained dancer.

What qualities do you think a dancer needs to get a contract with *Moulin Rouge*?

As well as being excellent all-round dancers, female dancers should be tall, look good in our beautiful costumes, and have a lot of personality. Male dancers need to be strong all-round dancers who are also able to do high kicks and the splits, with an athletic masculine build. I like our dancers to have a bright bubbly personality, a team spirit and of course a willingness to listen, learn and improve.

Any tips on how dancers can prepare for a big audition?

Dancers should make sure their kicks are up to scratch – up to the shoulder, and fast, not only on the going up but the coming down as well. If it's a while since you went to a ballet class, go now! There will be a classical section, and don't forget to practise your cart wheels. Dancers should be ready to perform in the audition and not be worrying about their dance technique; do that before the audition and make sure you are physically prepared.

Any tips on how to calm your nerves?

You can only do your best. Rather than letting nerves get the better of you, listen to instructions and don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand, just as you do in dance class. Once you are focused on what you are doing the nerves will quickly go away.

As an Associate Artistic Director, what do you look for during an audition?

I'm looking for potential. I don't expect to find the perfect dancer in the audition, but one that can be turned into the perfect *Moulin Rouge* dancer, that's what rehearsals are for. I shall be looking for dancers who may eventually be capable of doing soloist and principal roles. As we are open seven days a week, I need a lot of understudies and replacements for the lead roles.

What are the benefits to auditioning even if the end result is 'no'?

Unfortunately, it's not possible to offer a job to every dancer, so I believe in making auditions enjoyable. If you don't get the job you have at least learnt something. Gain from the experience and have a good time! You never know what will happen next time.

The DANZ website has another useful resource on Auditions: '*Landing a Role – Audition Advice for Dancers*', researched and written by Annabel Reader. This resource has an international, particularly European, focus, however much of the content is relevant to all auditions. Go to <https://danz.org.nz/Landing+a+role+-+Audition+advice+for+dancers>