



Preparing for the Professional Audition

The Hungarian National Ballet Company develops a strategy for the professional track dancer through their Summer International.

"By the time dancers send us their CV, we can safely assume that they have had solid experience in their summer audition routes going here and there locally and abroad for summer intensives and are ready to take the next step towards preparing for their professional audition" says Hungarian National Ballet Company's Ballet Mistress, Ildiko Pongor. *"We are a bit beyond the advisements to be on time or have an extra pair of shoes or eat a good breakfast. Rather, our intention is to take the next step and refine the dancer for the eyes of an Artistic Director who is seeking a good match for his or her company."*

"We are not a summer intensive, per se" agrees HNBC Artistic Director, Gabor Keveházi who oversees the 125 year old 110 member national ballet company. *"That doesn't mean that we don't have to point out to dancers some of their oversights about personal presentation-- and we do that a lot. But, our main focus is to identify motivated dancers who exhibit potential through submitted dvd or links to their work. We know very quickly if these candidates are poised to enter our summer program and perform, with coaching, in the subsequent audition."*

"Our summer international dancers are the types that seek out those missing dots that can connect them to Company decision makers. There is a lot of second guessing in this business and it can destroy a good dancer's confidence. The Hungarian National Ballet Company's Summer International program takes dancers who are open to criticism and delivers rigorous coaching on behalf of their careers. We act as advocates. In the end, these dance hopefuls have over two hours to perform on the Opera House stage in front of a live audience to prove themselves...you can't ask for more".

The second annual Hungarian National Ballet Company's Summer International (HNBC-SI) has developed as a result of the hundreds of audition requests that cannot be accommodated by the HNBC or other European companies. Artistic Directors agree that they miss a lot of talent that may not show up at Varna or the YAGP or any of the many other notable competitions held worldwide. "We are always looking for the talent under the radar" comments internationally

recognized adjudicator and ballet master, Eldar Aliev who will help direct the 2010 coaching course for three weeks (10 – 30 July, 2010).

The consensus is that it may be much easier to select low hanging fruit that comes the way of homegrown talent in national schools which have been developed expressly for filling the National Companies with compatible talent. As is, the world has increasingly become smaller and a global market has emerged. More and more countries are open to international dancers in the ballet and contemporary marketplace. Such is the case with the HNBC.

According to Gabriella Komor, HNBC International Cultural Manager, the HNBC is now home to dancers from South Africa, Japan, Russia, USA, Canada, Honk Kong etc. who have found their way to the world famous dance company in the last few years. "As soon as they opened their doors, we were there" says Tammy Higgins of South Africa. There has been a transformation in hiring for companies whose doors were traditionally closed to anyone but nationals. In addition, it was very difficult to navigate the audition process far away from home without contacts. The HNBCSI has helped such hopefuls.

"There are dancers who can dance technically but cannot perform well. There are dancers who have a nice physical facility but may not prove a good mix socially with the rest of the company. These represent very real hiring risks and we cannot afford to make such mistakes" explains Keveházi. *"Our program can vet applicants, coach and help position them in the marketplace with our final showcase".*

Both Keveházi and Pongor are recognized international ballet stars as well as international competition winners throughout their long dance careers. Here, they share their professional experience and advice for best behaviors during the course and for the audition showcase as well as follow up ideas:

The Course:

- During the preparation course, exhibit the kind of *work ethic* that proves that we can count on your professionalism. A dancer's enthusiasm in the studio says a lot about their approach to their work and everyone knows it. Every director when making a decision will first ask the faculty our impressions about work ethic and we will give it uncensored.
- We watch the quality of *interaction that dancers have with faculty and colleagues*. Dance can be a competitive environment but once a member of the company we expect team work and won't tolerate an abrasive approach. Cutting off fellow dancers, for example, in the studio or on stage in order to be noticed will certainly get you noticed....and in the wrong way.
- You may not get as many parts or the exact roles of your dreams. Such is life in a company. *Accept all roles graciously* and perform them to the best of your ability.
- *Implement faculty criticisms immediately*. Other than the weight requirements that take more time, the criticisms that come your way are the ones that most urgently need the fix. Do it and do it without fanfare.

- *A smile, some humor goes a long way.* This is not an invitation to undercut the disciplined environment but a reminder to learn to enjoy (and help others enjoy) the work in process. As a professional, you will work in close quarters with your new community....moodiness is better left out of the equation.

The Audition:

- *Don't make assumptions about your costuming.* Make sure that your costumes are in good repair, that they fit since the last time you tried them on and that your clothes and accessories are properly prepared in your dressing room.
- The audition in the Opera House includes a barre, center as well as classical and modern repertory. *All of it represents an audition.* You will be observed and evaluated every moment so one element is not more important than the other.
- *There is a full house evaluating you.* Play to them. The audience can be your friend and the Directors will certainly take into account your effect on ticket holders.
- *Graciousness is expected in all circumstances.* If you did not do as well as you would have wished, keep your disappointment to yourself. At the awards, you may or may not receive a scholarship, an accolade or a contract. Behave like a gentleman or a lady and remember to thank your co-workers, your instructors, the technical assistance and pianist for their time. Remember: there may not be a position this year but the impression you make remains in the back of everyone's mind. No one will hire a petulant dancer but long remembers a gracious attitude.

Post Audition:

- If awarded a scholarship, competition title or award, internship or full contract, make sure to connect with the decision makers at hand and thank them for their consideration and help. Shake hands and act professionally.
- Send a thank you note to the faculty and/or Director whether or not you were the recipient of awards.
- Don't be reluctant to request personal recommendations on behalf of your CV from willing faculty members or Directors. Some give them willingly and some don't. But, if you have been a good participant, their recommendations would be a great asset for future auditions. However, don't bring this to their attention at the last minute or when they are otherwise engaged in activities.

For more information about the 2010 HNBC-Summer International, please go to www.opera.hu/hnbcsi