

Dancer interview questions

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What to expect

Dancer hiring rarely looks like a standard job interview. Most of the decision is made in a studio, but a conversation with the artistic director, rehearsal director or producer still matters, and it is usually where they work out how you handle direction, pressure and the practical realities of a project based career.

- **Process and preparation:** How you approach learning repertoire, preparing for a season and building a character or quality of movement.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of handling redirection, injury, casting outcomes or group dynamics in a company.
- **Technical and physical:** Your training background, current class and conditioning routine, and how you manage your body across a demanding schedule.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Short hypotheticals about injury, last-minute changes and working with limited rehearsal time.
- **Teaching and client-facing:** Relevant when the role includes workshops, community programs or school residencies.
- **Industry and career:** How you plan around contract work, auditions and periods without performance income.

The process usually starts with an expression of interest or an agent submission, then a studio audition consisting of a company class, a set repertoire phrase, and sometimes a solo or improvisation task. A short conversation or panel chat follows, either same day or later in the week, often covering your availability, touring capacity, teaching experience and any checks required such as a Working with Children Check. Larger companies may run a second call-back with the full ensemble, while smaller projects often decide after one session and a phone call.

1. Walk me through how you prepare a new piece of repertoire, from the first rehearsal to opening night.

Why they ask

They want to see whether you have a repeatable method rather than relying on memory and luck, since rehearsal time is short and the material is often still being made.

How to structure your answer

A chronological walk-through: first read of the material, breaking it into sections, marking then committing, layering in musicality and intention, then consolidating before tech. Name the checkpoints where you review footage or take notes.

Example answer

"In the first rehearsal I watch the whole phrase before trying it, then mark it at half pace to get the order of movements into my body. Once the choreographer confirms the structure, I break it into sections and give each one a short label so I can call it back without watching someone else. I film runs at the end of each rehearsal and watch them that night, mostly for spacing and timing rather than shape. Through the week I layer in musicality and the quality they have asked for, and by the dress run I am working on stamina and eye line rather than steps. I keep a written list of corrections in my bag and check it before each call so nothing gets dropped between rehearsals."

2. Tell me about a time a choreographer changed the direction of a work late in the rehearsal period. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

Creation periods change constantly, and they are testing whether you stay useful and calm when material you have invested in gets cut or reworked.

How to structure your answer

STAR, with the emphasis on your actions and what the change cost or saved the production. Finish with what you now do differently.

Example answer

"We were about two weeks from opening on a new work when the choreographer cut an entire duet and rebuilt the second section around a smaller group. I had put a lot of rehearsal hours into that duet, so the first thing I did was ask for ten minutes to run the new material on my own so I was not slowing the room down. I wrote the new counts into my notes, filmed it, and spent that night relearning the transitions rather than the shapes. I also offered to help the dancer whose part had changed most, since she was carrying two tracks. By the next rehearsal the new section was ready to run. What I took from it is to learn the structure and counts early, because the surface movement is the part most likely to change."

3. What does your training week look like when you are in a heavy performance season?

Why they ask

Dancers are self-managing their own bodies, and a company wants to know you will still be available in week three of a season, not just on opening night.

How to structure your answer

Describe, then justify, then give a concrete example. Cover class, conditioning, recovery and how you taper around shows.

Example answer

"Every performance day starts with company class, which I treat as non-negotiable because it warms me up properly and shows me what is tight that day. On top of that I do two Pilates sessions a week and one strength session focused on ankles, calves and hips, which is where I have had problems before. In a heavy week I drop the strength session and keep the Pilates lighter rather than pushing through, and I add a proper cool-down and enough sleep, because that is what actually gets me through a run of shows. If something does flare up, I see my physio early instead of waiting to see if it settles. I would rather miss half a class than miss a performance."

4. You pick up a calf niggle two hours before a show. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a safe dance practice question dressed up as a hypothetical. They are watching for judgement, honesty and whether you will put the production or the ensemble at risk.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess, escalate, communicate early, then propose options and accept the decision.

Example answer

"First I would stop and assess it properly rather than warming up through it and hoping. I would tell the rehearsal director or stage manager straight away, because they need maximum notice to plan cover, not ten minutes before the half. I would speak to the physio or the company's medical contact if there is one, and be honest about what I could and could not do safely. If I could mark the show or dance a reduced track without making it worse, I would offer that as an option, but I would not push to go on if it risked the rest of the season. I would also check in with whoever covers my part so the handover is clean."

5. You have been asked to run a workshop for a group with a wide range of experience. How would you approach it?

Why they ask

Many dance roles include teaching, residencies or community work, and this tests whether you can read a room and plan something that works for everyone in it.

How to structure your answer

Plan, deliver, check: how you assess the group, how you structure the session, and how you adapt in the moment.

Example answer

"I would start by asking the organiser what the group has done before and whether anyone has an injury or access need I should know about. Then I would build the session around one simple phrase that can be layered, so beginners can hold the basic version and more experienced dancers can add travel, level changes or a second dynamic. I always include a proper warm-up and a cool-down, and I keep the language plain, demonstrating rather than only describing. Partway through I would watch for who is struggling and who is under-challenged, and give individual adjustments rather than stopping the whole group. I would finish with something they can perform for each other, because that is usually the part people remember."

6. This work is project based. How do you manage the gaps between contracts?

Why they ask

Employers want to know you understand the industry and that you will still be practising, available and professional when the next contract comes around.

How to structure your answer

Honest framing, then concrete systems: income, training, admin and readiness. Keep it practical rather than aspirational.

Example answer

"I plan for gaps rather than being surprised by them. My teaching work is the base that keeps rent paid, and I keep two regular studio classes going so I am in front of a room every week even when I am not performing. I stay in company class when I can, or take open classes, and I keep a conditioning routine going so I am not starting from scratch when an audition comes up. I also keep my showreel, headshot and availability current, and I check in with choreographers and other dancers between projects so I hear about work early. The gaps are part of the job, so I would rather manage them deliberately than treat them as downtime."