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That's Entertainment!

By Aimee Cremasco

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Welcome to That's Entertainment! In this issue, we'll explore part one of a three-part serial – Audition Tips – Straight From the Source.

We spoke with Judy Thomas, production coordinator and artistic talent director with Walt Disney's World on Ice, to learn more about the auditioning process. With seven shows currently rotating the world, Walt Disney's World On Ice (WWOI) employs about 400 skaters, both men and women. If you're interested in becoming one of the next recruits, read on. We'll uncover the facts about what it takes to become a professional Disney performer.

6.0 Skate: What should interested skaters do to arrange an audition?

Judy Thomas: We ask that they send a videotape, resume and current photo [see below for address]. Some skaters will just phone, they know that the show's coming into, say Boston area at Christmas, and they'll call and enquire about the audition time and date. Throughout the year, we take names and phone numbers and then contact them when we have an established time and date, and call and let them know.

6.0: Who conducts the onsite auditions?

Judy: Performance directors with the line captains demonstrating.

6.0: What do you want to see on a video audition?

Judy: Well, what I ask first is that they introduce themselves, and just tell us a bit about themselves. It gives a little more in-person view to the video, and also maybe with regards to why they want to perform professionally with Disney on Ice. We request that they perform all elements within a practice session and perform those as though they're performing in front of a house of 18,000 people. Then we ask that they include any competitive programs of their choice as well as any exhibition-type programs. Any time they're able to include a program that's entertaining and shows performing skills, it's really

appreciated.

6.0: What don't you want to see?

Judy: I'd say it's best to send a tape of your most current work as opposed to a competition four years ago. It's interesting ... you may receive a tape where someone's falling, and some people think they should edit that out, but it's the way they respond to that fall sometimes shows me exactly what I want to see. If they have the ability to get up and perform as if it never happened, that's wonderful!

6.0: How many skaters do you hire each year?

Judy: It really depends on our turnover. The amount of auditions vary and it's interesting because you

can almost see the cycleIn Toronto four years ago we may have had 45 auditions, where everyone was graduating that year ... and that's usually all the seniors in the club, and so you almost have to wait until the next generation of seniors grow up. So we audition in every city, I'd say we have several hundred auditions a year around the world. [It also depends on] how many shows we're building.

6.0: How many shows are currently on the road?

Judy: We have seven shows — five domestic and two foreign tours. The one tour does Japan, Asia, Australia, and then we have a Europe tour, and then one of our domestic shows does part USA and part South America.

6.0: In your opinion, is 17 years of age old enough to travel with a show?

Judy: I think it really depends on the person and not everyone is old enough. During the audition process we try to determine a maturity level and a level of professionalism. We have a lot of skaters now that come to work with us after they've completed college, and they have that experience behind them, which really helps. I would say our average age is probably higher than 17 or 18, probably more like 21 or 22.

6.0: What should skaters wear during an audition?

Judy: Skating attire, both males and females, that allows movement, but not baggy or loose clothing. [We want to see] their body lines when their moving and artistically to see how they move. It is a job interview.

6.0: What "spots" are available?

Judy: Principal positions requiring strong dramatic skills along with the technical abilities for either solo work, or pair work, or ice dance. [Also] ensemble positions, understudy positions, step outs, acrobatic skills, precision skills.

6.0: Do most chorus skaters have to jump?

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Judy: [Yes.] That's changed quite a bit. The wonderful thing is that for talented skaters that really want that opportunity to skate, it's there. Those requirements have elevated, each year they get more and more along with even more acting skills.

6.0: Do skaters need to obtain work permits?

Judy: No. Our company applies for, processes and takes care of all permits for all countries. [When providing information to legal representatives] it's a lengthy process, probably even lengthier in the past year.

6.0: What type of compensation is offered?

Judy: It's really based on so many factors. It includes benefits. We pay in U.S. dollars everywhere.

6.0: How do you decide what show to assign skaters to?

Judy: We would cast someone appropriately where their strengths would contribute to the most. You look for someone who genuinely has a passion for performing.

6.0: Why might you turn someone down?

Judy: I don't know that we've ever done that. We encourage people to audition again. We respond to all auditions, first by letter acknowledging the audition and giving them all our contact information and then if there is anything indicating on their audition form that we'd like to see worked on, then we'll give them specifics on that.

6.0: How long should skaters wait before auditioning again?

Judy: I would say if a show comes into your area again, and if we have not had an opening for you, if you're still interested, please come in. Number one, it reinforces their enthusiasm for the job and also it gives another performance director a chance to see them.

6.0: Are there minimum height requirements?

Judy: No. Now with the creative parts of the show, the height is not [important]. We have a girl who is 5' 10" and a girl who is 4' 9.5.

6.0: Is the six-pound weight range still in effect for skaters, and are Saturday morning weigh-ins still conducted?

Judy: Actually, we do an eight-pound. That probably has evolved really stressing healthy minds and healthy bodies. We have all looks. We no longer do weekly weigh-ins.

6.0: What do skaters pay in terms of "rent?"

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Judy: Again, it's all part of the benefit package.

6.0: Do you have anything to tell future Disney skaters?

Judy: The one thing that we offer is really the travel opportunity combined with the skating experience. We have people who have literally seen the world, so in that respect it's been an education in itself.

We'd like to thank Judy Thomas for speaking with us. For more information about Disney On Ice, please send your skating resume and a current photo to Judy Thomas, 1313 17th Street East, Palmetto, FL 34221, USA, or call 941 349 4848/941 721 1234.

A national-level figure skater until the age of 17, she began her professional skating career with Walt Disney's World on Ice, touring Europe for six months. Wanderlust semi-satisfied, she returned home to Canada to complete her formal education, concentrating on information technology and journalism. Word Associates was founded by Aimee Beck in 1999 based on the desire to share her experiences with other athletes and health professionals.

Entertainment Insurance For The Creative Soul

By Elizabeth Newberry

Are you one of those creative people who would rather starve than be caught working a nine-to-five desk job? One who is bursting with imagination and needs an outlet for ideas? One who wants to, or already does, work in the entertainment industry, whether it is the business of filmmaking or producing Broadway shows? If so, you need to consider purchasing entertainment insurance.

Entertainment insurance can be compared to the workplace insurance available to standard, nine-to-five jobs. Entertainment insurance can cover liability issues, as well as damages to or theft of the equipment you, your staff, and your cast use for your entertainment performances. Entertainment insurance can act as worker's compensation should you, your staff, or your cast become injured on the job, and entertainment insurance can even help cover the cost of production if the injury or illness of you, your staff, or your cast delays further production for a certain amount of time.

You can also purchase additional entertainment insurance that goes beyond just covering you, your staff, and your cast, as well as your equipment and production costs. You can purchase entertainment insurance to cover the cost of injuries and/or damages to audience members and/or their belongings caused by your performance, as well.

Most entertainment insurance policies last only for a specific amount of time, and that amount of time is usually the beginning, the during, and sometimes the ending of your performance. When you purchase entertainment insurance, you need to let your insurance agent know how long the entertainment policy must last. If you fail to do this, your entertainment insurance policy may run out before it's time, and if an accident occurs, you're stuck with no entertainment insurance.

Yes, there are many differences between the world of entertainment employment and the world of

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nine-to-five jobs; however, protecting your workplace, your employees, yourself, and your customers by purchasing insurance is definitely not one of those differences.



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