

Circus Performer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for circus performers often combine a practical audition with a panel conversation. The panel will want to see your technique, but they also assess how you work in a company, manage risk, and handle the demands of touring. Expect questions that probe your creative process, safety awareness, and physical resilience.

- **Practical audition:** A demonstration of your discipline, either live or via video, often followed by a Q&A; about your training and influences.
- **Safety and risk management:** Questions about rigging checks, injury prevention, and compliance with WHS requirements.
- **Collaboration and creative process:** How you work with directors, choreographers, and fellow performers to develop new work.
- **Physical conditioning and recovery:** Your routines for maintaining strength, flexibility, and managing fatigue during tours.
- **Behavioural questions:** Past experiences of adapting to unexpected challenges or resolving conflicts in a show context.

Typically begins with a practical audition or video submission, followed by a panel interview. The panel may include a director, choreographer, and production manager. You might be asked to demonstrate a short routine and then discuss your approach to rehearsal, safety, and working in a touring environment. Some companies also include a physical conditioning assessment or a group improvisation session.

1. Walk us through your process for preparing a new aerial routine from concept to performance.

Why they ask

This assesses your technical planning, creativity, and ability to work within a production timeline.

How to structure your answer

A walk-through structure works best: start with research or inspiration, then collaboration, conditioning, rehearsal, technical checks, and finally performance. Finish with how you review and refine.

Example answer

"I start by exploring a concept or piece of music that resonates, then I research similar routines and safety considerations. Next I collaborate with a choreographer or director to shape the movements and story. I build a conditioning plan to prepare my body, then rehearse sections slowly before linking them. Once the routine is set, I run technical rehearsals with rigging checks and lighting cues. After the first performance, I review recordings to refine details and keep the act fresh."

2. Tell me about a time when you had to adapt your performance due to an unexpected issue during a live show.

Why they ask

This tests your problem-solving under pressure and your ability to stay calm when things go wrong.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task you needed to accomplish, the action you took, and the result. Keep it concise and focus on your decision-making.

Example answer

"During a festival show, the aerial hoop was not rigged at the correct height due to a miscommunication. The situation was risky because my routine relied on specific heights for drops. My task was to deliver a safe performance without delaying the show. I quickly assessed the rig with the stage manager, adjusted my planned sequence to use lower-level skills, and communicated the change to the lighting operator. The result was a slightly modified but safe performance, and we fixed the rigging issue for the next show."

3. How do you approach rigging checks and safety compliance before a performance?

Why they ask

This is a core safety question. They want to see that you are methodical and know WHS requirements.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step structure: outline your pre-show inspection routine, how you document issues, and how you communicate with the rigger and venue. Emphasise compliance and teamwork.

Example answer

"I begin by visually inspecting all hardware, carabiners, and ropes for wear or damage. I check that crash mats are correctly placed and that the rigging points have been signed off by a qualified rigger. I review the WHS risk assessment for the venue and confirm emergency procedures with the stage manager. If I spot anything unusual, I immediately report it and do not perform until it is resolved. I also ensure my own warm-up includes a physical check of my body to avoid injury."

4. Describe a situation where you collaborated with a director or choreographer to develop a new act. What was your contribution?

Why they ask

This reveals your creative collaboration skills and how you contribute to a team.

How to structure your answer

STAR again, but emphasise the collaborative back-and-forth and how you integrated feedback.

Example answer

"I was asked to create a new duo trapeze act with a partner. The director wanted a narrative about trust. My contribution was to suggest specific counterbalances and catches that would physically demonstrate that theme. We worked through several iterations, and I gave feedback on what felt safe and achievable. The result was an act that premiered at a fringe festival and received positive audience feedback, and it became a regular part of our repertoire."

5. You are performing in a festival with a tight turnaround between shows. How do you manage your physical conditioning and recovery?

Why they ask

This checks your understanding of physical load and how you sustain performance quality across a demanding schedule.

How to structure your answer

A judgement-under-pressure structure: assess the demands, prioritise recovery strategies, adapt your routine, and monitor your condition. Show you can balance performance with self-care.

Example answer

"First, I assess the schedule and identify the highest-demand shows. I prioritise sleep, hydration, and nutrition, and I schedule short active recovery sessions like stretching or yoga between shows. I reduce the intensity of my warm-ups to conserve energy while still preparing safely. I also communicate with the company manager if I feel fatigue is affecting my performance, so we can adjust the repertoire if needed. Staying disciplined about recovery allows me to maintain quality across the festival."

6. What draws you to performing in touring productions, and how do you handle the demands of travel and variable venues?

Why they ask

This assesses your motivation and practical adaptability, since touring is a big part of the job.

How to structure your answer

A personal motivation and adaptability structure: explain why touring appeals, then give concrete strategies for handling travel and venue changes.

Example answer

"I love the variety of touring: new audiences, new venues, and the camaraderie of a travelling company. To handle the demands, I keep a consistent routine for sleep and exercise, and I pack my own small kit for warm-ups and recovery. When we arrive at a new venue, I do a full familiarisation with the space, rigging points, and backstage areas. I stay flexible and communicate clearly with the production team so that last-minute changes do not throw me off. The unpredictability is part of the excitement for me."