Working the Web

We asked company directors if your online presence can help—or hurt—your job prospects.

**BY NANCY WOZNY**

It's hard to remember a time before the web, when you couldn't just post your dance reel online for the world to view. While most companies won't hire a dancer without watching them in person, social media and websites like Dancemedia.com, where you can upload videos of your dancing, now make it easier to see and be seen. But with those changes come new questions about how to present yourself to prospective employers. Can a well-crafted website get you invited to an audition? Are artistic directors checking out your Facebook profile? What impact does the web have on hiring decisions? We talked to staff at five companies and got their thoughts on everything from sifting through YouTube links to holding “virtual” auditions.

**JASON HARTLEY**
Assistant to the artistic director, Trey McIntyre Project
Boise, ID

We are getting more links from YouTube these days. I am more likely to watch a link than a DVD; it's more immediate and convenient. And a surprising number of dancers now have websites. A website shows that you keep up with trends, are invested in your career, and have a good maturity level. I like to glance at the resume on someone's site to check on professional experience. We even hired a dancer, Lauren Edson, who first contacted us by sending a link to her website. I was lured by her choreography reel. Her site had enough interesting dancing for us to take it to the next step and invite her to Boise.

Sending us a website or an e-mail with links is a solid first step, but I can't really get an idea of a person's character from the web. That has to happen in person. Be careful about your Facebook profile, though. Shenanigans of kids acting like kids don't bode well for how you represent yourself to the world.

**ASHLEY WHEATER**
Artistic director, Joffrey Ballet
Chicago, IL

More and more dancers e-mail video links. That's fine, but I like to read a good resume, so send that along as well. The biggest problem is the quality of the video, which is generally not adequate. Often they are shot from too far away and are simply not clear enough. We need to see the legs, feet, and port de bras. Also, with online videos, the timing can be off. Even with a fast computer, there are stops and starts watching online, which distorts time. I need to see enough information to invite them to class. So send the highest quality video possible. As for Facebook, I wonder if it gives us too much information.

**SARAH SLIPPER**
Artistic director, Northwest Dance Project
Portland, OR

I much prefer getting web links from dancers to DVDs in a package. A link is right there and easy to click and watch, whereas a package can be put aside. I've seen a shift recently where more dancers are contacting us this way. Although we are unlikely to hire someone from viewing a video link, it's a good first move to getting an invitation to our Launch Project, a professional training program which is a path to the company. We don't use Facebook to get to know dancers; that happens in person and through the Launch Project.