

Crazy Horse Cabaret Gets Tape Out at Auditions

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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The jury laughing as five contenders stand before the media during casting for the French cabaret on Sunday.

Dressed in black tights, Natalya, 26, dances in front of a jury. Her dancing is important, but just as vital are her vital statistics.

A children's choreographer from Minsk, she was trying earlier this week to become a dancer in the Crazy Horse cabaret, a Parisian-based dance show that has combined striptease and burlesque for the last 60 years.

"I am looking for a job right now and, frankly speaking, I want to go away to Europe," Natalya, who refused to give her last name, said after an audition at the Olimpiyskiy Sports Complex last Sunday.

A tape recorder was as essential as good moves at the casting session as Crazy Horse

requirements, created by its founder Alain Bernardin in 1951, dictate very strict body sizes for all the dancers. They must all have dancing experience, too.

“It was difficult to find girls for selection. Some didn’t have a professional background, some lacked the required parameters,” said Yelena Bedush, from the booking agency MMDB.ru, which organized a competition.

Bernardin not only specified height — dancers must be between 1.68 and 1.72 meters — but proscribed the distance between the women’s nipples, 27 centimeters, and between the navel and the pubis, 13 centimeters.

The IKEA flatplan approach to dancers was so that all the dancers look alike in shape and size, indistinguishable from one another in dances that use creative lighting effects to tease audiences with the degree of nudity on stage.

Only five of the several hundred applicants made it to the final casting, which will take place on Saturday.

Only one or two of those will join the cabaret, which already has several dancers from the former Soviet Union.

“When a girl joins Crazy Horse, she joins the best troupe in the world,” said jury member and television host Dmitry Dibrov, a voluble and portly man for whom 27 centimeters between nipples is but a long and distant dream.

Although the show may not be as famous as Moulin Rouge, it has been seen by more than 8 million people. Elvis Presley, Madonna and John F. Kennedy on separate occasions have been among the guests.

In recent years, Crazy Horse has invited guest performers such as American burlesque dancer Dita Von Teese. Five special dances were created for her at Crazy Horses.

“It is nice to be bathed in that mystical Crazy Horse lighting and to be surrounded with those amazing girls,” Von Teese told the IndieLondon web site in 2009.

The Moscow show, called Forever Crazy, was made as a tribute to its founding father, Bernardin, who died in 1994.

In a city where striptease bars are a dime a dozen, it is unlikely that any audience will be shocked by the nudity on show at Crazy Horse as former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was when he saw his first cabaret dance on the set of the movie “Can-Can” on a visit to Hollywood in 1959.

Khrushchev noted that the dancing “cannot be considered quite decent.”

Crazy Horse performs through March 8. Cosmos Hotel Concert Hall, 150 Prospekt Mira. Metro VDNKh. Tel. 234-1246.

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