ANGELINA BALLERINA’S BIG AUDITION
Royal New Zealand Ballet
Dunstan Playhouse
Until 21 January 2012

Review by Fran Edwards

From the moment the blue curtains open the audience (mostly little ballerinas) is enthralled, wearing their tutus and mouse ears they watch with rapt attention.

With undoubted skill and a sense of fun these talented dancers relate, in dance, the story of when Angelina is invited to audition for the Camembert Academy. They show her preparation with Miss Lily and her friends at the ballet class, complete with naughty antics from the cheeky Henry.

From a reviewer’s point of view it is unfortunate that the program does not specify which dancer is dancing each role as the mouse masks make it impossible to tell. However, the standard of these dancers is high enough that I suspect they are, to an extent, interchangeable.

The second act takes Angelina to the actual audition at the Academy, where a very nervous Angelina dances against other young contenders to gain a place.

Angelina (or rather the dancer portraying her) dances well throughout, conveying the many emotions she experiences. In the first act Henry is a delight, cheeky and slightly naughty while moving very well and remaining likeable.

The variety of auditionees in the second act shows the dancers in a different light. While remaining essentially ballet, they show us Contemporary, Irish, Flamenco, Tap and Hip Hop dance moves. The characters Marco and AJ show any boys in the audience that dance is not sissy, while Charlotte, Viki, Gracie and Naomi all dance different styles for Miss Mimi.

The tale is well known by the audience and the characters well loved – and the applause is particularly loud when Angelina is reunited with her best friend Alice at the end.

The concept is simple, with well thought out scene changes and props, and is a credit to choreographer Antony Dowson and the creative team. The costumes by Wizzy Shawyer are distinctive and based on the original drawings.

Full marks to the Royal New Zealand Ballet for presenting this introduction to the world of dance to so many young people. Let’s hope it inspires some new ballerinas!