

Minutes from Showstoppers' Committee Meeting

21st January 2015, 6pm in 58/1067

Expected

SK – Sevan Keoshgerian (President)
BW – Ben Willcocks (Vice-President)
AB – Andy Banks (Secretary)
AM – Angry Morgan (Treasurer)
PJ – Phoebe Judd (Social Secretary)
JM – Jamie Martin (Development Officer)
CL – Cat Lewis (Tours Officer)
CH – Charlie House (Webmaster & Promotions Officer)
LE – Lydia Edge (Ordinary Member)
DM – Danny McNamee (Ordinary Member)

Apologies & Absences

JH – Jess Hector (Development Officer) – Apologies (Interview)

Non-Committee

CT – Charlie Taylor
HB – Harry Burnett
LR – Loïc Radermecker
KP – Kimberly Pearson
AS – Andy Sugden
CH – Charlie House
BF – Bradley Fahy
GT – Gem Tunley

Munch Duty

Lydia

Agenda

I. MAIN UPDATE

BW: It's been another eventful week, we have got new a Bobby, Jamie Martin, and exams been a testing time but the cast have kept up with the schedule. There was a small hiccup on Saturday, Kim and I had a nightmare where we called a rehearsal at 10 and turned up 2 hours late. One thing I'd like to mention, was the lack of cast members who have my phone number, so none of them called me, so it would be good if more of them did. Other than that it's going well.

KP: The cast are good and patient, sometimes everyone is there but not everyone has lines or doing something. It's been quite a while since we had feedback from Angry.

BW: Angry's popping in Saturday.

HB: I've heard on the grapevine how much the cast are enjoying it.

AB: Producer-wise, we now have confirmed artwork and poster/banner designs, Charlie is mega great and kind and helpful and patient. Costumes-wise we have all the gold costumes, the hats have already arrived.

II. FRESHERS UPDATE

Direction, Musical Direction and Choreography

Andy, Harry and Kimberly all brought different aspects of a good directing team to the show, building on Andy's experience, the cast recognised that Harry and Kimberly took some time to get into the groove, but when they did they produced a fantastic show with a brilliant cast. Harry brought energy, Kimberly brought ideas and Andy brought consistency and control over a new directing team. There were some calls for work on acting technique. The directing can be summed up in one audience feedback: "A challenging task for a young directing team and I would hope a warm glow of satisfaction after the last performance of a job well done."

There were some issues with scheduling, with some cast members highlighting how they were called early just to sit around and wait for them to be called – however, this was an issue which was brought up midway through the process, and the cast all felt they had improved their timetabling by the end of the show, with intensive week very well organised. As is common with Fresher's shows, the cast are never sure of what they've got themselves into until intensive week. But this was a process made harder by people turning up late, some cast members identified that harsher punishments rather than a comical Just Dance needed to be enforced by the production team.

The cast adored Becky and Megan, they made the process fun and enjoyable, with many highlighting how the team worked together well as a unit – making it the best part of the process for some. They were always happy to go over any harmonies the cast struggled with, and praise was given for recording harmony lines for the cast. Some cast members thought it would have been nicer to see the two switch their roles more often, to allow them both to explore the other side of musical directing.

It's easy to see the cast and crew loved Kenni and Josephine's personality, they made every dance an enjoyable experience because of the people they were. They were praised consistently for the strong, collective image their choreography gave of the cast as a selected unit, and this was a similar trait picked up by audience members. A few issues arose with the style of teaching, especially when learning the dances for the first time. Cast members felt it would be more useful to go over the dances at a slower pace, and over multiple sessions if necessary, rather than just repeating the dance when there were still visible issues where cast members struggled. The 'recap sessions' were considered a great help to many of those who struggled with the routines, and it is advised that future prod teams start these sessions earlier in the process, especially as videos over Facebook only provide limited help in learning. Some extra work on dance technique would be useful, though this could be looked at further in workshops and is not the fault of Kenni and Josephine who did a spectacular job of creating a simple and enjoyable dance environment.

Production

Whilst not explicitly part of the production aspect of the show, it is important to address the role played by the Producers in constructing the physical side of the cast in Footloose. Charlie, Jess and Ben received particular praise for their work on keeping costumes and props at high quality whilst working on a very restrictive budget. Further comments suggested the team were expertly focused, especially during the show nights, when the cast needed them the most. There were some comments over people needing to supply their own costumes, but it should be appreciated all production teams act within a budget and it is unlikely that the producers will be able

to source every piece of costume, especially given a large number of costumes were everyday wear. Charlie House also did a brilliant job in publicising the show, although this was something which production team members highlighted he shouldn't have had to get involved in.

Largely, the production team felt the presence of a producer at rehearsals was useful, allowing them good communication with the other side of the production team. However, this usefulness was limited by the actions of the producer at certain rehearsals. Although this proved to be an issue within the production team, many of the cast were split by the presence of the producer, with one saying the presence was appreciated and showed great commitment towards the show acting as an 'unofficial cast liaison', whilst others highlighted they were unhelpful and distracting to the cast and production team, throughout the process.

Producing was split rather unevenly, with one production team member highlighting that the original 2 producers of Ben and Jess should have been enough to work on the show. The workload was not shared evenly, and this resulted in one Assistant Producer being neglected and the other being bumped up to a Full Producer because trust issues emerged within the team over the ability to do the job. The main lesson to learn from the producing of Footloose is that people need to have clear distinctions and people should not look to overstep their boundary on their workload, but similarly they must not shy away from the role they were given.

Tech and Staging

Tech continues to play a vital role in all of our shows, and the praise for StageSoc and their fresher team was no less than brilliant. The cast and prod team commented on how the team were constantly looking to help them, especially when it came to safety and sorting their mic packs.

One comment from a cast member highlighted an issue with the get out, which left a majority of the cast sitting around not knowing how to aid StageSoc. The list of jobs on the board was helpful, but the technical names and use of equipment meant they still felt largely clueless. One comment suggested a possible 'get out tutorial' for very heavy tech shows, but whether this would just complicate the clear up further is down to StageSoc's discretion.

The staging received praise all round for it's good use of levels, with many audience members picking up on how a "relatively small stage" was used to great effect. The audience loved the combination between the set and the lights, no comment can summarise better than one cast member: They brought the show to life.

AOB

Regarding the coin-game that, if used in the future, proved to be a successful fundraiser for the Showstoppers' Ball. It received mixed feedback as being "too enforced, not being able to leave", but overall reflected positively. "A an aside, the young man who did the "heads & tails" in the interval should be congratulated. It is a great (and easy) way to raise funds. The audience was very rowdy and quite mean. He carried it off with confidence, but maybe a note in the programme may help to encourage more to take part in the future."

Summary

I always thought feedback voices a show's praise better than any liaison, so I've ended feedback with some quotes from the process. Overall it was thoroughly enjoyable and both cast and prod team spoke highly of their experiences. The show redefined the level of future Fresher shows and all those involved should be incredibly proud.

Cast: "I LOVE Footloose and am so grateful to have been in it and to have become a part of the Showstoppers family."

Audience: "I really enjoyed the production there weren't any empty seats so that must tell you something."

Audience: "I think everyone who was in it should be congratulated in committing to a production with a fairly short run-in time and carrying it off superbly. Brilliant".

Audience: As our ex-President stated, "One of the best dance show's I've seen Showstopper's do."

Prod Team: "GOLD STAR!"

Prod Team: "I loved this cast so much, and I miss them already."

Prod Team: "If I had a time machine and could go back and relive the whole experience again, I would. But I can't, so I won't."

III. SMALL UPDATE

AB: We have all of the costumes now!

LE: My poor bank account! For everyone here in the show, 2 weeks yesterday it will have been opening night.

GT: If Sev makes me improvise I will smack him!

LE: Around 25% of our budgeted ticket sales have been met by reservations so far, Charlie has done some trailers and they're good. Georgia's secured a lot of reviewers and sponsorship, flyers and posters have been ordered.

DM: I'm going to come in over intensive week and make sure everything is still fine.

CH: We've also been using Facebook advertising, which has been working really well, reached 1500 different people so far.

LE: Catriona has also told us that she wants to be under special thanks, rather than having a full credit as Assistant Producer in the programme. We told her she had done more than enough to earn that credit but she didn't want it, so we have respected that wish.

IV. SUMMER UPDATE

AS: Hello. We have a readthrough tomorrow, we've had a couple of little character meeting sessions before we start properly. We're still finalising a rehearsal schedule, and had a prod meeting as well and went through the schedule and when things should be done by. I am mad at myself for being behind, it's a distressing process.

DM: I'll be going into the readthrough tomorrow too.

V. DEVELOPMENT & WORKSHOPS UPDATE

JM: There was no point doing workshops during exams, so the first one will be next week, at 2 or 3. I've also talked to Robbie and he's not pitching Independent this round.

DM: Aidan said it might not be ready this year, as Robbie's written his bit but Aidan hasn't written any.

JM: I haven't got a reply from Baby Wants Candy yet, and Gecko are having trouble, as they require a specific type of floor, it can't be hard or concrete, it sort of has to be bouncy or sprung. I've looked into the dance studios and they're all booked constantly, so I'm now going round, begging the individual societies. Spring cabaret will be in Bar 2 again, with Summer cabaret in the Bridge.

The next workshop shall be from 5-6pm next Wednesday, with pitches beforehand at 2pm. Jamie will continue to chase Baby Wants Candy, and see if Gecko will be possible. Spring Cabaret will be in Bar 2 on Wednesday 9th march, at 7.30pm.

VI. EDINBURGH & INDEPENDENT UPDATE

CL: Pitches are next Wednesday at 2. This Saturday there will be an FAQ meeting, for which I've asked people of current shows to put up a post on their respective groups by the end of week, with Ruthie, Aidan and myself giving people answers on everything from pitches through to the festival itself. There are potentially a couple of things about Gone Rogue and how it's currently being used, that could or should be utilised which I'd like to bring to TG and Comedy too, but that makes more sense post pitches when we have a show. I've had a fundraising chat with Ruthie, and also C Venues still seems the most sensible option but there are still a few small issues we have to talk through.

VII. TREASURER UPDATE

AM: So the Edinburgh budget template thing I made, well that's out for people to use because the normal one you can't really use, because of transport and other Edinburgh-specific costs, so that's now on the event and website. We finally got C Venues cheques through, and got £200 more because C Venues cocked up, so we now have more money than we thought. I've emailed Charlotte Cloud to ask how to pay the loan back.

SK: I've messaged Becky about the keyboards so she'll do that for me.

AM: Funding came through for Gecko, and 2 lots of sponsorship from Mango for Company and Chorus Line. I've talked to Andy about the Company and Chorus Line budgets and set the show deposits. I also messaged Dan Wills today, saying he needs to pay the money.

Angry will pay the loan back to SUSU via Charlotte Cloud and continue to chase Dan Wills. Sev will wait to hear from Becky where we stand on the keyboard half-funding front.

VIII. SOCIAL UPDATE

PJ: Pancake social? Yeah we could try it, if we get a house big enough? I'm gonna put a poll up about the infamous Playzone social, the issue is we need some kind of transport because trains are a nightmare and driving people isn't fair as they then can't drink. Jamie Hemingway and Chris Ball have both said they'd be happy to drive a minibus, so I'll look into that and see what we can do.

Phoebe will investigate the possibility of a pancake social, and try to make the Playzone social happen.

IX. WEB, PROMOTIONS & TECH UPDATE

CH: I've not got a lot to say really, it's cool.

AM: He changed my photo, finally!

DM: Charlie, what happened to democracy?

CH: I've added "Venue" to the pitching form on the website for the sake of Independent shows.

GT: Can you make the website rain, as it is not snowing anymore, and outside it's always raining now?

X. ORDINARY UPDATE

Lalala

XI. A.O.B.

CH: I've been looking at the committee email accounts, and Ben Willcocks has never logged in to his committee emails.

AS: Even more impressive, the TG Ordinary Member account has not checked since March 2014!

WE'RE BETTER THAN THEM.

AS: Also, in case How to Succeed aren't in committee, could minutes be uploaded, even if just to the website?

I am not better than anyone. I am the worst.

CL: I mentioned last time about pitches feedback? In any case, it needs to happen before pitches next week. If you're happy for it to be on group

GT: For Chorus Line, we didn't get librettos for ensemble so I've had to photocopy lots, and that's been £20/30, so how do I do the receipt things Angry? Also everyone please come to my Disney birthday tomorrow. We'll be having pre-drinks at 32 Alma Road, then go to the Edge, in a bright pink sparkly dress!

CL: I mentioned last time about pitches feedback? In any case, it needs to happen before pitches next week. If you're happy for it to be on group

Thus ensues a long, long discussion about how to run spoken pitches, in a way that is less intimidating and overly interrogative towards the pitching teams. Some things we introduced for the last round worked, whilst others fell flat a bit, so more discussion was had for that too. In conclusion;

FUTURE RUNNING OF SPOKEN PITCHES

- Lydia will be chair next time
- On the release of the written pitch, we will ask for people to send any questions they have to the Chair, therefore the Ordinary Member email address. The Chair will then ask these questions first in a topical order to the production team. After this, the Chair will ask for questions on individual topic areas in progression; for example Questions on Budget, then Questions on Direction, and so on.
- If the answer to a question is very clear in the written pitch, the Chair will be able to veto this question if appropriate. There will also be copies of the written pitch available for people to read, if they want, during the spoken pitch.

- Before the pitch, the Chair will remind everyone there that questions are meant to be questioning, rather than pointing out negative things to the team that they can't change, if they are aware of it and have mentioned it.
- Lydia will be the chair for Edinburgh and Independent pitches next week.