

Showstoppers' Footloose Feedback: Fresher's 2015

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 Kenny 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 Kenny 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."