

Freelancers Feedback

NOTE: Much of the feedback for 'Freelancers' from the cast and production team was self-reflective, and so some quotes have been summarised to respect anonymity.

What relation are you to the show?

Out of 8 responses, 2 were cast members, 3 were audience members and 3 were production team members – a real mixture, yay!

How did you hear about the show?

Out of the 3 audience members, all said they had heard about it through friends or family, and one said they had heard about it through social media.

How has the rehearsal process been?

Although there was little feedback from the cast in this aspect, the general feedback was very positive in this area, with the cast member who responded saying it was fun.

From the Production Team, the response was mixed. One production team member said the process was 'Great fun! (The) cast were great fun and worked well together. (The) Prod Team were all super helpful and the process generally went smoothly'. Another said 'the process was thoroughly enjoyable, the cast was great to work with, were willing to work hard when we needed and were great at putting their personalities into the characters'.

However, other feedback from production team members acknowledged that the process was 'stressful', 'extremely busy, and a bit flustered'. Generally, this was put down to the short amount of rehearsal time and the busy schedules of cast members. It was also stated that 'rehearsals were very slow to start with, and people probably had time wasted in rehearsal when they only had minimal work to do'. In addition to this, another production team member said that things were left to the last minute, which caused the lack of proper sound and made the cast stressed.

It was suggested that for Independent Shows, a Production Liaison should be much more present, and be more of a supervising producer than a normal liaison, in order to make sure that the Production Team are following the way that Showstoppers shows are run.

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENT SHOWS: Make sure your rehearsals are well organised and planned, to minimise time wasted during rehearsals. Use your production liaison to keep on top of things, making sure things are not left to the last minute.

What did you like about the direction?

The feedback in this area was extremely positive, with one cast member saying 'I loved the freedom of speech we had as cast members, and how open the directors were to listening to our suggestions throughout the process. Allowing us (to) implement our own jokes and improve funnies was what made this show great' adding 'I really hope other prod teams do this in the future'. Another said 'I like how excited and enthusiastic they were. Clear direction from Aidan, always always open to listen. Sean is a boss'.

Members of the production team said that 'Aidan and Sean are goddesses open to input from the cast and huge fun to work with' as well as saying that the 'Directing was good, kudos to the direction

team'. Another member noted that 'I think Aidan and Sean brought very different energies, which hopefully the cast enjoyed.'

The audience members said 'the whole show seemed very well put together and cohesive' and that it was a 'snappy, super-fast-paced comedy with excellent writing. Really can't fault it!'

What could be improved about the direction?

The majority of the feedback in this area was with regards to organisation of rehearsals and nature of the direction.

One cast member said 'sometimes we were called for a rehearsal 3 hours before it started, which annoyed a few of the cast members, especially because we were so close to exam period'. A production team member also noted that rehearsals starting earlier would have been helpful (although it was noted that with 'such a big cast, most of whom were doing other shows that overlapped, this was difficult to avoid'). It was also suggested that less time be spent on notes, perhaps through giving individual feedback.

Another production team member said that 'due to each of (Sean and Aidan) having other projects on, it was annoying that (we) couldn't direct at the same time as much. This may have meant some of the direction was incoherent', as well as a director saying that their 'direction style was a bit aggressive, but I'd like to think people understood that I wasn't serious with any of it. I would understand, however, if some people were put off by this style', although neither of these points were reflected in any other feedback. In addition to this, a cast member stated that it was 'occasionally a too many cooks situation', while a production team member said directors were 'too loose at times, waiting for people to turn up and messing around at the start of rehearsals'. It was also suggested that 'if they want to do something a particular way then make people do it that way' adding that 'too many times people made other suggestions and the directing team just went with it'. A cast member also acknowledged this, saying 'sometimes they listened too much to people's advice who weren't directing or in comedy about what was the best joke for the situation'.

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENT SHOWS: As mentioned in rehearsal process feedback, make sure that rehearsals are well planned and organised to minimise time wasting. Directors could be more authoritative and not allow cast to make decisions that should be made by directors. However, allowing the cast to have input was also a positive, so directors could use their discretion as to where this is appropriate.

What did you like about the production?

The feedback in this area was entirely positive, saying it was 'unbelievably brilliant', that 'they were amazing, Paige and Sarah couldn't have done any more' and 'everything so sick'. In addition to this, an audience member said 'it was a really tight show, everything fit well together beautifully'. Charlie and Catherine's efforts were also noted, with a production team member saying 'trailer and photos were sick. Without Charlie and Catherine stepping in to do certain producers bits themselves things wouldn't have got done'. Another production team member also said 'the cast, prod team, band and tech crew were all lovely, talented and super helpful' while also saying the opportunity to use the Annex was a huge positive.

What could be improved about the production?

There was very little feedback in this area. One production team member suggested 'it would have been nice to have Catherine the whole time, but completely understandable that she had other things going on'. An audience member also suggested clearing away some of the stuff that ended up on the floor during the performance, as 'people were nearly falling over it at times and someone could end up hurt if they fell'. Finally, it was also advised that 'the prod team need to ask for help next time – committee are there to help them but they need to ask for it!'

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENT SHOWS: Use your production team liaison to keep in touch with committee and ask for help when you need it.

What did you like about the musical direction?

This section was full of nothing but praise for Robbie, with cast and audience members saying there were 'really impressive songs with a kind MD' and that 'Robbie was great, and taught the songs ridiculously quickly, and well', 'Robbie is great', 'Music was fantastic and fit the piece wonderfully', 'The music was catchy and fun, the song lyrics were always entertaining and interesting'. It was noted that 'the cast were very enthusiastic and the band were a joy to play with'. An audience member summed it up by saying 'I loved the writing and the music was secure with everyone, a real mix of voices and compact tight band made it awesome!'. One cast member simply said 'everything'.

What could be improved about the musical direction?

The feedback in this area was to do with sound levels and the short rehearsal process.

One cast member said that the 'MD was just a little bit too kind. At time people couldn't tell whether they were singing something right or wrong because he was too nice to tell them they were slightly off!'. A production team member also said '(Robbie) needs to not give in to everything everyone says. If he has written a song a particular way then make people sing it that way!'

It was acknowledged that 'it was tough balancing the sound because we didn't manage to get the SUSU amps or a mixing desk, which would probably have made the tech run much easier in retrospect', with other feedback saying the show 'needed mics although the MD was adamant it didn't'. This was disputed however, as other feedback said they were 'still undecided as to whether radio mics would have help or not'.

One audience member said 'I know that you folks put out shows pretty quickly and don't have a whole lot of rehearsal time, but I feel that the singing could be improved', while another suggested 'this was obviously cast extremely heavily on comic acting merit, to the point where it ended up with a few less experienced singers in smaller roles who found it hard to hold their tune, let alone project over the band and fill the space'. This was also mentioned by a production team member who said 'the cast had very mixed abilities – often acting was prioritized over singing which ultimately served the show well but made teaching more difficult'. It was suggested by an audience member that 'the overall quality would absolutely skyrocket if the vocals were ALL as of such high quality as the acting – from some limited experience, generally it's easier to coax more acting out of a stronger singer than it is to train a strong and confident actor in proper vocal technique'.

However, despite the above feedback, one audience member said they 'just want to hear more of it', and a cast member said 'nothing, bang on great boy'.

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENT SHOWS: Musical Directors should be more authoritative when teaching songs they have written, and let cast know when they are not singing it correctly. Some rehearsal time should be spent on vocal technique. Get in touch with your production liaison and Showstoppers Committee to make sure you have the equipment you need to balance sound.

What did you like about the choreography?

Although feedback here was limited, it was all positive. "Twas wonderful', 'Ruthie was great, shame we couldn't have had her the whole time, but kind of her to help when she had time', 'it was easy' said the production team and cast, while an audience member said: 'it was minimal, which fit the tone well'.

What could be improved about the choreography?

The feedback here was equally limited, with a cast member saying 'it was sometimes a little too easy', suggesting that the choreo should 'find your best dancers and utilise them, and don't make people who can't dance dance. They'd look better just standing or posing', with a prod team member also acknowledging that 'there were a few good dancers in the cast so they should've been used more'. An audience member said it 'could have been more cohesive', suggesting that more rehearsal might have been needed.

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENT SHOWS: Choreographers should find their best dancers and utilise. Rehearsals should be allocated to dance as organised by the production team.

What did you like about the tech?

Again, feedback here was limited but positive – 'StageSoc were helpful as ever!' and 'solid as ever'. Due to the show being an independent, one production team member acknowledged that they 'lucky to have anything at all' and that 'Catherine did a great job working with the directing team and making sure the show actually happened'.

What could be improved about the tech?

The only feedback here was a reference back to the music feedback regarding amps and mixing.

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENT SHOWS: As above, get in contact with your production liaison and Showstoppers Committee early on to guarantee the sound and lighting equipment you need.

Any final comments?

'Thank you to Showstoppers for such a great opportunity!'

'In the future, independent shows need way more time to rehearse. Given that most cast members were involved in other shows, starting a month earlier would have helped so much. We had 2 or 3 stressful meetings trying to organise rehearsals around other show schedules, which may needn't have happened if we had more rehearsal time. The cast were genuinely amazing though, they worked hard and were clearly focussed in producing the best show possible.'

'It was a very good show from the audience's perspective. However, it was not run properly and that cannot happen again. It very nearly didn't come together, and ended up putting unnecessary stress and time commitments on (people not directly on the production team) who pulled out the stops to save it.'

'Overall I loved the show, it's just a few bits that I feel could be improved.'

'Overall one of the best productions I've seen ever at Southampton, because of how tight and close the cast were, how much fun they were having, and how great the writing was'

'One of my favourite shows I've seen at university, super script and really talented team. Nice balance of acting and not too many songs that would detract away from it. Bloody hilarious.'

'I LOVED IT AND I LOVE EVERYONE.'

FOR FUTURE INDEPENDENTS: Independent Shows need to more time to rehearse. Production Teams should involve committee and their production liaison as much as possible, in order for the show to run smoothly.