

Direction

All cast that responded commented on how enjoyable and fun the rehearsal process was. “Robin and Robyn were a fabulous team and unlike some directors, they gave the time needed to teach music and placed a lot of emphasis on combining singing and acting”, commented a Musical Director. They were said to “have a really good grasp of the show and all it’s themes” and their ideas were described as “cohesive”. They were complimented on their approach towards the shows delicate themes and on the amount of time they dedicated to characterisation, not only through songs but through each step of the show’s story. Many cast members mentioned that the rehearsal process was well organised with rehearsals being inclusive and productive, complementing the on how they handled time constraints and availability of cast members. However, a couple of them mentioned that it could have dealt with being more intense, one saying they would have been “happy to rehearse more”. One cast member noted that it was frustrating that the schedule was played about with so much, making it difficult for people to know when they were needed. They said that this was especially hard when they were only told who was called in the early hours of the morning of the day of their rehearsal. Maybe going into next year, the organisation and use of time in the early summer rehearsal process may need to be reviewed.

Musical Direction

“JOE AND GEM ARE GODS” is a direct quote that could be used to sum up the gist of what many cast and prod team members felt. Every response praised the pair on their hard work, and a frequent comment was that the way in which they worked as a team was very effective. “The things that needed to be accomplished musically in the show were divided up well between the two of them, in a way that played to their individual strengths as well as their team ones”, said one cast member. “I even heard cast members saying that they didn’t know they could sing how they got them to sing“, said a member of the Production team. Gem was given particular praise by almost every response for the way in which she stepped up to playing the piano in the performances on two weeks practise. “Gem in particular worked incredibly hard to make sure the music (arguably the most challenging aspect of the show to make fantastic) was slick and performed with the proper support and technique”, was a nice quote. However, one response commented that the MD team sometimes took out their frustration on the cast, saying “often tempers were short/situations were not handled in the most professional manner possible, which was often a little disappointing, and brought the mood down.” Many responses commented that going into next year, the infamous “backing track” issue needs to be addressed a lot earlier on, but both Joe and Gem could not be praised more on how they handled this issue.

Production

Fliss was complimented highly by every single respondent; she could not have got enough praise. She “worked tirelessly not just every day of our intensive summer rehearsals, but every day of Edinburgh as well”, and she was described as “a whirlwind of good ideas, innovation and general organisation throughout the whole process and it is down to her organisation that the shows in Edinburgh ran as smoothly as they did.” It was noted by a couple of cast members however that sometimes when she got stressed, it had a negative impact on overall morale. One cast member mentioned that this may have been because she needed more support from her fellow prod team members up in Edinburgh, and another mentioned that the cast were willing to help but often not given the opportunity. Jamie was commended time and time again for his contribution, in particular his connections with C Venues and with getting the exciting Adelaide opportunity. The flying schedule, like the rehearsal schedule, came up a couple of times as something that should have been organised better to avoid same-day notice. The boxes were mentioned a hilarious number of times.

Cast

The social side of being in this cast seems to be the most frequent theme in this feedback. Comments on how much fun they had, how well they gelled and generally how much they love one

another come up in every response. A close second were comments on how dedicated and committed each and every one of them was, with one respondent summarizing nicely that “every single one of them put in performances to be proud of both at the Southampton previews and in Edinburgh.” Angry and Sev in particular, on multiple occasions, were congratulated for putting in an extraordinary amount of effort. However, there were a lot of comments arising about cast discipline that need to be addressed. It was commented on by cast and prod team alike that some individuals “needed to be reminded who was in charge sometimes”, particularly with regards to producers and MDs. Many respondents said that when stress got to some cast members, it led to a “fractious cast experience”, or if you like, “a bit of a downer”. It was noted more than once that this did cause performances to suffer. These problems were put aside eventually though, and that they didn’t hamper the fun everybody clearly had. Things to take from this in the future appear to be encouragement for cast to communicate their problems, and as one cast member beautifully put “a small but important thing to keep in mind in future, that at difficult moments we should be aiming to come together rather than fall out or fall apart.”

Tech

Many people applauded the basic-ness of the tech, saying the lighting and sound was great and that Robin should be congratulated on his role in teching the show. Blocking the scenes for the thrust seating seems to have been successful, although a couple of cast members noted that they were often only half-lit, and that this was picked up in more than one review. One cast member said the lighting was “tedious and poorly organised”. This could have been an easy fix, they suggested. The boxes were highly praised for the effect they had on the show, but little else. A couple of respondents picked up on a faulty keyboard issue, but praised how quickly this was solved. One cast member noted that the venue was “larger than we perhaps needed”. There were a few concerns that the prod team were unable to communicate effectively during the get-in and that this led to a stressful experience. This may need to be better organised going into next year. Special thanks were mentioned for C Too venue staff and Stagesoc for their work in the Annex, as well.

Show Overall

Overall literally everybody from the cast has been praised. It was a difficult show, and although a couple of people noted that with more time it could have reached its full potential. The overwhelming majority was that you guys pulled something incredible out of the bag. A great number noted that they were surprised it was reviewed so harshly in Edinburgh, as family and friend responses seemed extremely positive. It is a shared thought that the show was a very well thought through choice with one respondent calling it a “perfect show for the space, and good length”. The subject matter was challenging, which the cast loved, but the themes were handled with care and one cast member said they never felt uncomfortable once. Things to consider, however, include the fact that the show didn’t really have an even split of stage time amongst the cast, and whilst the choice of show was unanimously praised a couple of people mentioned that when picking a show next year, considering the longevity of the experience, we may want to think about giving everybody enough to do. It was disappointing that the backing tracks were unavailable or that a live band couldn’t play, although the single piano was regarded as a lovely touch and helped with an intimate feel. We may want to consider our options earlier on next year from a position of experience. One cast member was disappointed with the lack of dancing, saying “there were some fantastic numbers in there which I felt would have really benefitted from a bit more movement and frivolity” – again, something to consider for next year as the space was large enough. And finally, a note for the future from a producer: The ridiculous amount of costume changes perhaps highlighted that when we consider future shows as a society, we may want to consider how much we are actually asking from our cast during the run. To reiterate though, truly fantastic vibes all round and literally everybody should be so proud. A success, feedback would suggest.

Gone Rogue Tours

“A mad and amazing experience.” “a real asset to the society.” “The most amazing yet stressful yet eye opening experience ever “. How many ways can you express that everybody had a bloody brilliant time? However, as is the way, this section contained very many suggestions that we could look at going into next year. A couple of small negative situations of people getting stressed and becoming sharp at one another seemed to dampen the experience somewhat for a lot of people, which is a shame, and looking into next year it is suggested a couple of times that cast and prod team alike are encouraged to be more professional and to communicate better. One cast member mentioned that if we look at feedback for our shows over the entirety of 2014/2015, we will see that this is becoming all too common in the society, and they suggest that we resolve this ASAP before it becomes something regular. This seems to be ever the more important in Edinburgh as, obviously, the team spends so much time together. We need to think about how we, as a society, will avoid this next year (although a common theme from feedback seems to be – less stress about reviews!). C venues got a lot of praise, the passes especially were well received. A few noted though that the staff were not the most professional, and that we may want to consider alternative venues next year considering people are less likely to take a risk with shows from C, given the amateur theatre connotations. Regarding Gone Rogue, a couple of respondents provide caution for the future by saying that the company does not have the best name for itself in Edinburgh given previous reviews, and so maybe even our touring name needs a rethink. This is a discussion I know is happening within TG, so this will be pressing issue in the next year. People did like all shows going down under one banner though as it made the Southampton PA feel united. A few respondents would have liked “accommodation organised earlier and with more transparency from the very beginning about the process and more opportunities for contribution from members of the show so all could feel that the best option had been achieved.” Finally, a huge thanks goes to the committee, Gone Rogue subcommittee and the Tours officer, Sev. To close, a lovely quote, “Brilliant, there’s not a person I wouldn’t recommend it to (that doesn’t have a spare £800).”