

A Chorus Line Feedback

The following feedback consists mostly of quotes as they were submitted. Some submissions have been condensed or omitted to prevent repetition. Some of the responses have been summarised to highlight trends in the feedback. In some cases, submissions have been moved to a section that seemed more relevant.

Rehearsal Process

“The rehearsal process was undeniably stressful because of the nature of the show and some bad organisation at the start of the rehearsal process which led to us being behind schedule. However I really enjoyed the challenge of catching up on intensive week and loved performing the show so it was a positive experience for me.”

“Quite a struggle, but we got through it!...” “...It was certainly a process that became more enjoyable the further in we got...”

“I enjoyed it but I feel that it took more stress than it needed today to lack of strict organisation in rehearsals, but I was glad to be in the show when it all came together”

“...There were several weeks before a proper schedule actually went up which distressed the entire cast for a long period of time....”

“Generally lots and lots of fun. There were a couple of stressful rehearsals where everyone got somewhat negative but we were all guilty of that. The rehearsal process really took off properly after Christmas and I felt that the time before Christmas could have been utilised much more effectively with better scheduling...”

“The process was fun, I had a blast getting to know the show more and it was something amazingly different to what Showstopper's has actually done before - such a creative show which put so much emphasis on the group of the cast....” “...Scheduling was a massive problem, key dances were learnt last, lead songs were taught first when the entire cast was around and should have been taught ensemble numbers first.”

“It wasn't particularly well structured throughout - often people were sitting around or doing very little and time could have been used much more effectively. Also members of the prod team were often late or distracting in rehearsals.”

Summary: The process was enjoyable but stressful for most involved. This was due to problems with scheduling and a lack of organisation within the production team. When time was available it was not utilised in the most productive way.

For future production teams:

- Release a rehearsal schedule asap that is as detailed as possible with the most difficult aspects scheduled as early as possible
- Use time efficiently and make sure that you have a structure to how you want the rehearsal process to run. You want the scheduling to not cause worry within the cast.

Direction – What did you like?

“The directing team were very good at reacting to feedback given by the cast. Issues that arose at the start of the rehearsal process were acted on and resolved very quickly (e.g. Ben writing up detailed character descriptions scene by scene). Both directors' enthusiasm increased noticeably towards the end of the process. During intensive week and show week the rehearsals were more stressful (as to be expected) but the enthusiasm, brought by the directors, made it more bearable and enjoyable for the cast. Despite being a

dance orientated show, the scenes involving dialogue were given good direction and these scenes were by far the aspect I felt most confidence in by the start of intensive week.”

“I liked the character workshops that were run throughout the rehearsal process. The couples character workshops were also a really good idea that helped me get a better understanding of my character. The documents put on the group were very informative and useful. Both directors really stepped it up in intensive week which was very impressive to me.”

“It’s a very light heaving show for blocking, which was nice given the level of difficulty in the other two fields. Ben tried to help everyone develop characters including meeting with them and putting up a character sheet. Ben did a brilliant job of attempting to keep cast morale up...” “...Kimberly’s notes were by far the best I’ve had at Showstoppers. They were concise, precise and focused on the areas which needed to be improved in 5 minutes....”

“It was very much appreciated that both Kim and Ben spent so much time at the lampie desk going through all the cues beforehand to make the tech run as short an evening as possible for everyone else.”

Direction – Improvements

In general, there was a consensus that the direction could have been improved. It was mentioned that the leadership shown by the directors was lacking, that ‘it would have been useful for them to be stronger willed and tell their team not to put so much input into the direction. I think the directors struggled with being authoritative towards the cast and the prod team.’ This is further highlighted with this quote, ‘I felt that the show was led by choreography and musical direction when it should be overall organised by directors.’

It was also noted that the ideas that the directors had for the show could have been better expressed to the cast. For example, one cast member said: ‘The distinction between what sections were actually happening in real life and what was happening in the imaginations of the dancers was not even drawn at all, and was not clear to the audience.’ This then had to be made up for by the cast, one of whom said: ‘In terms of characterisation, it was up to the actors to bring the character to the table for approval from the directors rather than it be a collaborative process between both of us.’ This made the process more difficult because: ‘they would not be able to say what it was that they wanted, but became very critical when it was not what they expected.’

One of the biggest things that could have been improved was communication. This entailed the communication between the directors and the rest of the prod team. One prod team member said: ‘There was very little communication between the directors and the rest of the prod team which lead to a lot of confusion and members of the team having no idea what was going on at times. This could have been avoided if the directors had communicated properly.’ It was also said of communication between the directors and the cast, one cast member saying: ‘I think greater communication of the overarching themes/vision would have been helpful to everyone.’

Lastly, it was mentioned a number of times that one member of the direction team was particularly distracting in music rehearsals, which made the process more difficult for the cast and the rest of the prod team members. Furthermore, it was said that there wasn’t enough pre consideration with regards to the blocking of the show; as one cast member said ‘ a lot of the direction was decided in the rehearsals leading it to take way longer than it should have done, and it could have been blocked before hand.”

Production – What did you like?

“Wonderfully produced show”

“The costumes were great and it was really really helpful having all the hats for One in time for the rehearsal. The design of the show was fantastic and I think it really sold it. The use of facebook advertising was once again a really good thing. The cast meal was lovely.”

“Loved the costume, gold and sparkly does it for me. Production team were ON IT the whole way, google docs were posted regularly and I never felt worried about anything.”

“The production team have been very efficient with this production. From one of the first rehearsals, Natasha was already getting some of the cast to try on costume which was extremely positive to see. Bradley was incredibly fast as sorting out sponsorship for the show and organised a wonderful cast meal. Andy was also great at listening to what people wanted/needed costume wise and ordered the remaining bits quickly.”

“We were told that if we were uncomfortable with what they asked us to wear, they wouldn't make us. I think it was a genuinely nice touch which made people feel more relaxed in their costumes anyway.”

“...Charlie House deserves a lot of credit as I get the impression he had significant input into the producing (yet again) despite not being officially on the team (yet again). His designs and photography looked fab.”

Production - Improvements

“It would be nice to get back into the habit of getting Cast Clothing earlier than we currently are because then people get more wear out of it and it is better more prolonged advertising for the show...”

“The only thing that was a shame was that we could not get NSDF to come and view the show as the producers were slightly too late in asking them...”

“The flyers didn't say what time the show was! But it wasn't a major problem”

“...Put the ticket link on the flyers...”

“...In terms of producing, it became a worry. Only a week before the show started did I see my costume in the flesh. The cast meal was ludicrously expensive and on a Sunday night when most of us had early starts the next day. There also seemed to be a lot of tension between the producers and creative team which threw a lot of us...”

Summary: Overall, the production was praised, but there were some things that could have been improved.

For Future Prod Teams:

- Get show clothing as early as possible to act as prolonged advertising rather than just as a souvenir for the show
- Make sure the flyers are as detailed as possible with all the relevant information
- Decide early on whether you would like NSDF to come and see your show so that you can invite them in plenty of time

Musical Direction – What did you like?

“Gem was an absolute star and was the glue that held the show together. She is such a trooper and pushed through everything from losing her voice frequently to coming in and being ready to go on time the morning after her birthday to quite serious concussion. She was always prepared to go over even the tiniest of things with individuals and put them at ease even during the busiest and most stressful rehearsals...” “...Singing

rehearsals were well planned and time was always used effectively, and we were taught songs well in advance of us having to be taught the corresponding dance which was useful.”

“Gem was quite literally a God, taking the reins of the production...” “...In terms of musical direction, she was her usual self, recording harmonies for us, being patient with a large cast and teaching music techniques to be able to take into other shows.”

“...if a soloist wished to practice their song, Gem would stay behind after rehearsal to go through it with them. This is also a big show to take on by yourself as an MD but Gem did it with great conviction and the cast truly appreciated her efforts.”

“Gem and Becky were amazing. Music was taught really well and feedback was clear in rehearsal. The Dropbox files were a godsend!”

Musical Direction – Improvements

The main issues that came up in responses were about the communication with the Choreographers and the fact that the cast were often disruptive during music rehearsals. These quotes summarise the responses for this section:

“It would have been nice if there was more joined up thinking between the choreos and Gem as we were taught things first singing then dancing, which makes sense but there were some issues towards the end of the rehearsal process which could easily have been avoided if the cast had been able to match the dance moves with the lyrics earlier on. For 'One' and some bits of 'Montage' it would have been a damn sight easier to do if instead of trying to concentrate on what we were singing and what our bodies were doing at the same time, we actually had been taught what words you are singing when you do each move. This is on balance more of a choreo issue, as largely we were taught to the soundtrack (which is understandable) rather than the piano and were never really encouraged to sing during dance rehearsals, at least not until the end...”

“making sure the cast do not talk over Gem, and that directors aren't distracting her when she's teaching..”

Summary: Everyone had comments of praise for Gem and the main improvements that could have been made were in relation to the communication between the musical directors and the choreographers.

Choreography – What did you like?

“Ruthie and Phoebe were excellent at choreographing a very challenging show...”

“Choreography was absolutely great and looked cracking by the time the show came around...” “...They provided many opportunities for recaps which was really helpful and were great at teaching technique such as the tap. It was also really useful to do the dances with mirrors a couple of times and was additionally really helpful to do I hope I get it at the start of every rehearsal once we had learnt it... Alex gave really helpful feedback during the runs and was generally a joyous addition to the choreographing team.”

“The choreography was ambitious and impressive, making the show much better as a result. Some dances were choreographed and taught early on, allowing us to become much more confident with them as we practiced them more and more. For the most part, the choreographers taught the dances very well and it was stress free and enjoyable.”

"I loved learning the dances and the challenge of learning something new. Ruthie and Phoebe were very patient and did so well choreographing so much! They helped us with our problems and many times stayed late or arranged private groups on their own time to go over dances which showed astounding commitment to making us look good on stage."

"The choreographers were super keen to teach the cast techniques for this show which was so positive as Showstoppers sometimes lacks as a musical theatre society when it comes to dance..."

Choreography - Improvements

There were a number of things that could have been improved in relation to the choreography. One of the main points from the feedback that was raised was that the dances were taught at the last minute. For example, one cast member said, 'we were still being taught dances during intensive week. This should not be happening. There was not enough time for us to polish those numbers and deprived us of time that could have been used to polish other things.' There was also an issue that both prod team and cast noticed, in that 'A lot of the choreography was being made up at the last minute and at times was being made up during teaching the dance. All dances should be prepared in advance.'

It was also clear that the cast were aware that the choreographers had not enjoyed the process and that this was evident in 'their attitudes when teaching dances. It wasn't particularly enthusiastic and would lead to nobody enjoying the rehearsal.'

It was also said that the choreographers became too stressed during the process and that this had an adverse impact on the cast's morale. For example, one cast member said that 'Ruthie tended to get stressed at the cast and would let us know by walking out of the rehearsal or vocally.' and another saying that she 'Sometimes got stressy at us when we were honestly trying hard to get the choreo correct.'

Lastly, it was suggested by a couple of people that Alex wasn't given enough to do as an AC, saying that ' It was clear that Phoebe and Ruthie pushed him out' and that 'this was disappointing... Giving him more to do would have de-stressed them more and actually made the dances of a higher quality.'

Tech – What did you like?

"Stagesoc were fantastic, from lights to sound to stage. Phoebe was a very competent TD also"

"The lighting was the metaphorical icing on the metaphorical cake of the show. And it wasn't bland, tasteless icing either - it was the good sugary stuff."

"Phoebe was a star as always"

"Techies were friendly and super professional as always. Mic changes were done with ease. The lighting looked really good, as far as I could tell from on stage. The fact Kim put in hella hours on Sunday so that our tech rehearsal wasn't abysmal was really great and really helped show week go well. It was good that we got in the Annex earlier than scheduled, this was really helpful and again helped the performance go as well as it did."

"Tech was so fit, the lights were gorgeous and every show went smoothly"

“The simple staging worked brilliantly and the microphones on Friday night were done perfectly, whoever operated them was just pin-point focusing on the levels of the show, which is often missed by StageSoc members.”

Tech – Improvements

“Talking to StageSoc earlier to understand exactly what we wanted from the set. Although it was fine in the end it was slightly different than anticipated, but that was by no means their fault”

“The lighting sometimes was odd. With random spotlights at point and colours which certainly didn’t seem to have a purpose. The band were far too loud - sometimes I could not hear myself singing/ saying my lines.”

“...Communication between prod teams and StageSoc continues to be an issue on the fault of the production team. They need to work with StageSoc more going into the final weeks of the production's rehearsals.”

For Future Prod Teams:

- Make sure there is a lot of communication with StageSoc and that it is initiated early on in the process

Final Comments

In general the show was liked, however, a number of improvements were suggested that should be taken into account when putting on subsequent Showstoppers shows.

Most responses repeated points that have already been mentioned but those that weren't, were not specifically about A Chorus Line therefore have been added to the section below in 'extra comments for committee to consider.'

Extra Comments for Committee to Consider

Wednesday Afternoon Rehearsals

- “...I don't particularly like the new habit of having rehearsals on Wednesday afternoons as they are difficult for some people and are also the only time some people have to do university work. It also made Wednesdays rather long with an evening rehearsal as well....”
- “...A note for the society: I don't know where the idea of Wednesday rehearsals came from, but they're now present consistently in Chorus Line and H2S. I understand why they're done but they cannot be mandatory.... We dedicate enough time as it is to shows and I think it's crossing the boundary of respecting our free time for other activities, especially sports on Wednesdays...”

Issues with the Spring Show Slot

- “...Main Show/Spring Show needs to become more appealing for a prod team perspective. It's by far the most stressful slot of the year with a huge cast to control and very little time. It became very difficult to manage both the cast and the prod team when everyone became so negative and against the show....”
- “In future, I would suggest that pitches for main show are done earlier on in the year (even when Freshers and Small show are pitched as Main show can start rehearsing from October of Semester 1) - I know before there has been issues with the Nuffield slot but there is no reason why Showstoppers cannot pitch a main

show with the intention of going in the Annex and once this has been chosen, the committee can decide whether this show should pitch for the Nuffield?"

- "...Never before have I been significantly worried about the end result of the show. Having the excuse of 'Main show is always like this' was not enough of an excuse in my opinion - Learning vital scenes a couple of weeks before opening night, combined with learning the hardest dance routine of the entire show just over a week before, was not ideal for a very stressed and worried cast..."

Clashes with Small Show

- "...We weren't really given enough time to bond as a cast because of overruns with Company, which meant we were restricted in the time limit we had with everybody..."

Prod Team and Cast Crossovers

- "...Andy oscillating between cast and prod team proves awkward too - sometimes you felt you couldn't talk to him openly even though he was one of the 'cast.' Something needs to be reviewed in terms of prod team position and cast position. Quite clearly, Andy cracked under the increasing amounts of pressure, both playing the lead and being a main producer. Combine this with jumping from small to main show so quickly, he would have needed zero sleep to be able to have pulled it off. Evidently, the producing suffered..."
- "...It was wayyyy too much for Andy to do both..."
- "...Andy should not have done both roles, it was clear he was stressed out enough by the part, that having to do the other aspects as well was taking a toll..."