

## **How To Succeed Feedback**

The feedback here is almost entirely in full quotes as it was submitted. Some submissions were omitted if they were short and tended to repeat other points raised. Where quotes have been edited, lines have been removed to improve how the submissions read and some lines have been removed which spoke about very specific details and thus are not helpful to the society going forward.

### **How has the rehearsal process been?**

“Mostly really fun! Our cast were lovely, although I wish that they had actually looked at our rehearsal schedule rather than relying on the posts in our facebook group. I also think there was a little bit of tension between some of the more experienced members of the cast and the directing team in particular- although it was great that they felt like they could make suggestions it felt a bit frustrating for people who had planned a rehearsal or scene. Cast were also really, REALLY loud and bad at coming down to the stage when we asked them to, which often ate into their breaks because we were then running late! Breaks were generally a bit tricky, especially in intensive, because although we had advertised an hour long break, certain members of the cast were often very vocal about not wanting that long which meant that other members of the cast missed out. As suggested before, the crossover between Company, Chorus Line and H2S (and Tempest and Fiddler to some extent) meant that we essentially lost a month of rehearsal time because almost all of our cast was in another show that took place during our rehearsal period. I think it's definitely worth considering how many people are involved with all 3 full length shows that they can be (Freshers/Small, Main AND Summer takes a toll on both rehearsals and people's degrees!) We obviously managed to pull it all together, but I think our drive to create something really great meant that we were often a lot more stressed than our cast because we wanted to push them to be the best they could be.”

“Tiny bit sorry to the cast for being a bit harsh at points, but directing a show brings that out in you, and the level of misbehaviour sometimes made me feel like a schoolteacher! At the end of the day though, we produced a bloody good show, and one I think pretty much every audience member enjoyed, which is, as far as I'm concerned, worth all the stress. From a prod team point of view, I have to say that the way liaison things are structured in Showstoppers doesn't help shows as much as I feel it should. It may just be a case of getting 20 Showstoppers in a room, but when people are in there talking to the cast liaison, it feels pretty nasty for the prod team outside, and these sessions can easily last for 30 minutes. This cuts into rehearsal time, and is pretty horrible for some of the people outside the room, especially when the feedback isn't especially important or of any great magnitude. I would suggest aiming to keep these sessions to 10 minutes in the future - I feel this is enough time for any serious comments to be made and addressed.”

“The rehearsal process has been an efficient one. The timetable was available from the start and detailed. a few moments when people were called and not necessary, or plans for rehearsal were done a bit late so it was not easy to prepare for the day, but generally well done. rehearsals were effective and fun.”

“I've loved the rehearsal process! I like to think the prod team created a good balance between fun and hard work, and the results were evident by show week. The cast were so hard working and diligent in learning their harmonies and dances etc, and although there were a few stressful moments these were soon ironed out by changing certain aspects of rehearsals, taking breaks and having days off when it all got a bit too intense!”

### **What did you like about the direction?**

“Yes it was good! Andy is much more talented than I thought, he did a stunning job of guiding the cast in their blocking while developing their characters, which made everything feel really natural. His focus on the humour was really great as well, especially in teaching people how to say lines for the best effect. Rob and Bella were also fab, it was lovely to have them in the room and I hope they have learnt a lot from the process!! Bella's notes in particular always felt really constructive.”

“Acting was very strong in this play as an obvious result of clear and brilliant direction. Every cast member had very good characterization and was believable and 3 dimensional on stage. Praise for Robin Harris as his enigmatic and lovable portrayal of Mr finch, he had the audience eating out the palm of his hand. Charlie Taylor also deserves credit for playing the lovestruck, whimsical Rosemary endearingly, without annoying the audience with her obsession! Both actors were paired brilliantly together and their scenes were heartwarming and funny. The greatest acting performance of the night however was James Cook. He stole the show as Bud Frump, an unusual character for him (as he's usually cast as the heart-throb of the play). The audience awaited his scenes with glee as he was simply hilarious. Even his entrances and exits had the audience laughing. His physicalization vocalization and pure commitment to the role combined to a spectacular performance, which will be remembered for a while. I've never liked the 'bad guy' in a show so much. Congratulations to James!”

“It was amazing, super organised and knew exactly what i was doing! Also, they were authoritative but allowed for the cast's views on direction as well!”

“I should have given more chances to Rob & Bella to help early on (and I think feedback will reflect this). They had really great ideas, and Rob got stuck in a bit, but Bella did a lot of sitting at the side of the room, which made it quite hard to involve her even when I wanted to. I think when it got to note making time we addressed this though, as I mostly let them take over!”

“The direction for this show was wonderful. Very strong team with Andy leading and Rob and Bella adding their part. Very approachable and always giving good constructive feedback.”

“Show was well directed. Everyone had something to do, even when they were just in the background. There wasn't a moment where anyone wasn't doing anything. And all the transactions were beautiful”

“Andy did a great job and had a really clear insight for the show. I also think that the high amount of character workshops and hot seating enabled the cast to really develop their characters, even those with smaller roles.”

#### **What could be improved about the direction?**

“Work on rapport between on stage couples”

“I would have liked to see a little bit more of a focus on the ensemble, although I appreciate that time constraints made that difficult I think with 3 directors they could have done at least one session just with the ensemble cast. Within the show they don't have many lines, so it would have been really nice to spend some time working on their background acting with them, as it felt a bit like they were neglected in favour of the leads.”

“Sometimes quite patronising and apathetic or even negative in feedback. Constructive criticism is essential, not just saying that you're doing it wrong. "You're not acting" is not an appropriate way to give feedback. A bit of banter is more than fine, but things sometimes got taken a little too far. Constantly being compared to another, more talented cast member in a more important role than

you is undermining and a little offensive. I love the team for being straight-talking but there is a line.”

“It would have been nice to see Rob and Bella have a little more to do during the rehearsal process, as when they did give direction and notes, it was very insightful and useful.

some scenes weren't blocked until quite late on in the rehearsal process and this posed some slight difficulties towards the end of rehearsals, but it was all eventually sorted.”

#### **What did you like about the production?**

“Really good, looked super professional - lots of publicity which was great and seemed very organised”

“It was extra lovely to be given so much creative freedom, and I think it showed in the production in that there was one overarching vision across set, costume and props rather than conflicting views. “

“Set was gorgeous, and the space creatively used. I really liked the 2D aspect of the design which gave the set a very interesting and unique feel. Costumes were appropriate and conveyed the setting and time well. The lift was also a very clever touch.”

“Catherine Hyde was FAB as ever and Emily was an amazing foil for her, picking up jobs wherever Catherine offered them and being a gr8 stress reliever throughout the whole process. I think the fact that Emily was at a few rehearsals as well really let everyone involved know she was part of the production, and I hope we all made her feel like that! We're always looking for more producers in this society, and Emily is definitely someone who should be asked again, every time! Charlie House remains a God in terms of helping with various bits of publicity, so what's new.”

“Literally cannot fault Catherine for her work; she put in so much effort for this show with sewing velcro onto overalls, scrubbing paint off of desks etc. Emily also did a wonderful job, always being there at rehearsal as well, noting looking for work to do. It really goes to show that effective production team goes a long way.”

“Costumes were great, I especially liked how Finch's costume was added to every time he went up in the business. Set was great, minimal but it worked.”

“Catherine was so brilliantly organised with everything, and was on top of everything that needed to be done. Emily really proved herself after being bumped up to a full producer, and she went above and beyond what was expected of her - she was really great!”

“the production was very speedy and costumes and props were ready mostly well in advance with enough time to practice”

#### **What could be improved about the production?**

“In an ideal world we would have had slightly more room in our budget for costumes so we didn't have to rely wholly on what people had, but I think it came together reasonably well for the most part. I also wish that 2003 had had more exciting ladies' hair so we could have done something for them but sadly it was very similar to what is in fashion now! Both Yvette and Emily did a superb job of picking up all the small tasks that I didn't have time for, especially in the week before the show. Also maybe I would not have bothered with that dumb tearaway boilersuit because it was a lot more trouble than it was worth. A warning to future producers poundland velcro is, if anything, more sticky than normal velcro.”

“Can't think of anything production wise to be improved!”

“some props/ costume issues weren't sorted out until show week and luckily this didn't turn out to be a problem, but it would have been nicer to have had everything sorted before/during intensive”

**What did you like about the musical direction?**

“Nice big sound from the band, seemed well rehearsed - complemented on stage actors well. Also, love the conducting technique “

“Joe and Megan were a wonderful team, the band sounded amazing and they were really patient with a very boisterous cast!”

“Great as always. Vocals were very strong from all the cast. Praise to Charlie Taylor, who for me had the best voice of the show with refreshing and moving vocals in all her songs. I could feel her emotion through her singing, giving a lovely performance.”

“Joe and Megan were fab as per usual, always amazing MDs and are super organised so get recordings, harmonies and parts taught really quickly, giving plenty of time for perfecting through recaps.”

“JOE BARR IS BAE! SO IS MEGAN! They were fantastic in their help and musical direction. Music was taught effectively and in good spirit. Recording of parts to listen to in our spare time was a stroke of genius and they were both awesome at this!”

“Errrrrm... Joe and Megan? What's not to like? I mean honestly, they were both FANTASTIC through the whole process, and worked perfectly as a team. Joe was the more vocal in terms of notes, as expected, but Megan was also prepared to put the boot in when it was needed, which made everyone's job easier! Also the band were fantastic.”

“Megan and Joe are a lovely duo and i am glad to have worked with them again. they complement each other in the roles of MD and worked really well to produce a good show with a strong musical sound. They were specific in how they wanted things to be done which added character and really gave the true meaning of musical direction.”

“ALL THE THINGS!! Joe and Megan were absolutely wonderful and are an absolute joy to be around, as well as a credit to the society. They deserve all the praise they can get for being so fantastic. They were always up to date with things that needed doing, were very patient and always willing to help out when they could.”

**What could be improved about the musical direction?**

“I think maybe we could have done with rehearsal tracks for the instrumental dances but then Ruthie probably should have asked for them a bit earlier!”

“Band was a little loud at times.”

“Could have been a bit more vocal and forceful in rehearsals... Felt a little bit undermined by the rest of the prod team... But nothing too serious!”

“I challenge anyone to improve it.”

“Literally nothing.”

“if they're going to change the music in any way so that there is no longer a version a choreo can use on YouTube or whatever, that music needs to get to the choreo asap, because otherwise they do end up doing it on the spot because it's the first time they've heard it themselves”

### **What did you like about the choreography?**

“THE LIFTS AND FLIPS Also the mailroom dancing using the props was really cool”

“It was so so slick, and I liked that it was tailored to the ability of our cast really well. I'm sure they didn't expect there to be so many dances when they auditioned and I think they all learnt a lot! I am really glad that we had both Loic and Claire on board to explain the more fiddly bits to people who were struggling so that they could have some one on one teaching time, and the songs that they choreographed were all amazing if a bit daunting at first!”

“Choreography was good as always. Coffee break was probably my favourite scene visually.”

“The fact that we, as an amateur student society, could do - and smash - Broadway choreography was amazing, especially because we all laughed and thought it impossible at the beginning! They were, all three of them, amazing!”

“LOIC AND CLAIRE ARE THE BEST. So patient, willing to go over things again and again. Funny and great generally. The genius of Loic and Claire's choreography was very impressive, even when put on the spot. Ruthie was generally a good spearhead for the team.”

“It was, as our lead choreo would say, 'sick as balls'. The choreo in this show really elevated it above and beyond the norm, and the fact that there were beautiful dances in pretty much every song made the show race along at the pace that was needed and never get dull to watch. Loic and Claire also deserve special praise, and I hope Claire gets the opportunity to choreo a lot more shows in this society. She's a phenomenally patient teacher.”

“Strongest choreography team showstoppers have had. Each bringing their own perspective. I have to commend the creativity in songs such as 'coffee break' and 'company way' because it really shows amazing 'musical theatre choreography'. It shows that choreography does not have to be complicated and difficult to be effective.”

“Mate!!! The dances were on point!!! So well done! Everyone did so well with the impressive choreography. And those flips and lifts. I got stressed out every time one happened I got heart palpitations but it was done so wonderfully, you can tell it was all rehearsed so well.”

“The choreography for the show was so clever, and some of the best Showstoppers has ever had, in my opinion. Claire especially did a fab job, especially considering that she'd never choreographed a show before. Also, props to her and Loic for juggling choreography with their ensemble parts!”

### **What could be improved about the choreography?**

“Coffee Break and Company Way both looked sick. However, I'm forced to agree with the reviewer who suggested that it was perhaps a bit lazy to reuse the Tony ceremony choreography for Brotherhood- I think it could have been much better if it had been created by our choreos and it would also have been a bit more suited to our cast's ability rather than being super stressful and definitely not perfect in comparison to the rest of the dances which were all quite snappy. Big ensemble dances should probably be aimed a bit more at the worst dancer rather than the best ones, especially for sections where everyone is doing exactly the same thing! It was the sections which the choreos adjusted to fit our cast and the space that looked the best. Worst of all was when

the choreographer showed up to teach dances with no idea of what she was going to do. I think her being very stressed and having to make entire songs up on the spot made everything a lot worse for the cast.”

“The main choreographer did get a little stressed, which sometimes meant she became a bit short tempered or too expectant of us or choreographed dances on the spot, which resulted in a large amount of pressure on the cast and the other choreo's. But she was amazing regardless!”

“Difficult I know, but would have been nice to not have copied the Broadway dances exactly (e.g. Loic and Claire did not). Also, Loic was put on the spot to create dances immediately when I know he likes to take time to do this. This put unnecessary pressure on him.”

“A couple of days that were dance-focused were the ones that the cast got pretty stressed on, and it would have been nice if all the choreos had decided to believe in the stupidity of the YoHoHo from the start, rather than undermining it.”

“The only negative thing about the choreography was copying from the Daniel Radcliffe Tony performance. I think this was a detriment their talent as shown in one of the reviews. Although i enjoyed the dance, a lot of people could mainly remember that one when they could've choreographed something good as they shown throughout the show.”

“More back flips”

“Sometimes choreographer's stress had an adverse effect on the cast and made them less enthusiastic and a bit down hearted, especially when things weren't going to plan or the rehearsal was running behind schedule.”

“it would have been nice to do some stretches in show week before shows but aside from that all the dancing was amazing.”

#### **What did you like about the tech?**

“MAN THE SET WAS GREAT Being Stagesoc but on a prod team is honestly so valuable, because I was really picky about details which other people might have been a bit wary of doing, but it honestly improved the show a lot. It also meant we knew what we were asking for, rather than being vague. Joe especially was amazing for a first time TD, really competent and also friendly!”

“Perfect as always, stage soc are gods.”

“StageSoc showing they're beasts again. Wonderful tech and some of the best set i've seen. GOOD JOB GUIZE.”

“Yes. TDs were oh so helpful (special praise for Joe Lynch for always being on hand to just sort out the stupid jobs that take 5 minutes but sometimes get postponed), and Catherine's set plan was beautiful again! The rest of the tech team were also great, it was good fun to have Alex Lloyd around, and Edmund King playing another inanimate object was worthwhile. Corin and Ruth lit the show beautifully and without requiring me to say much, and it was opped wonderfully by George. As for sound, it was again great, with Toby mixing his final band (I cry errytime), and Xavier being great to talk to (and providing me with a choice of about 5 phone rings, which should be encouraged). If I've forgotten to name anyone... sorry, I didn't mean to name this many to start with.”

“Phoebe and Joe are FAB. They were so lovely to work with and made the band sound amazing! This was such a tech heavy show and stagesoc did a brilliant job with everything.”

### **What could be improved about the tech?**

“Don't know“

“As ever, sound is a bit weird in the Annex”

“Can't think of much tbh. They do a great job.”

“Best crew ever.”

“Occasionally couldn't hear principal cast at the beginning of their songs, wondering if the mics need to be turned on earlier?”

### **Any Final Comments?**

“Loved it, fantastic show - everyone should be extremely proud of it”

“Would have been nice to actually see our production liaison at some point- there were a couple of points during the process where I felt like I needed to talk to someone because I was very stressed, but I didn't feel like she had any investment in the show at all. We also felt like we HAD to be at committee every week in case she forgot to pass something on, which was a little bit frustrating. Some members of our production team brought personal tensions into intensive and show week which really soured the whole process for me- I think we should maybe be trying a bit harder to stay professional. All in all though an amazing show, I love everyone. In other news why is there no 'cast' box on this form I just wanted to tell Robin and Charlie Taylor and James how proud I am of them for carrying a 2 and a half hour show so effortlessly and for coming so far through the process!!”

“LOVEDDDD the show!! Best quality production team by far of all three shows I've been in this year... They should be so so so proud of themselves!!”

“Generally a great way to be introduced to the society and a great show. Thanks to all involved.”

“Wonderful! Really good communication between tech and prod team and cast.”

“Best Showerstoppers show this year! I'm upset that I only saw it once. It was amazing”

“The prod team was probably a bit too big given that Andy and Catherine were so relentlessly on top of everything that there didn't seem to be much left for the rest of the team, especially Bella and Rob (who were fab but I felt bad that they spent an awful lot of their time just sitting there, especially in dance rehearsals.). I know Yvette was forced to be absent for personal reasons but it felt like there wasn't much for her to do either.”

“I don't normally bother with feedback but I just wanted to say that this was one of the best things I've seen showstoppers do. I don't particularly enjoy How to Succeed as a musical however you guys managed to make it so much fun and just an absolute pleasure to watch. You are just such an incredibly talented bunch”

“This has been the best Showstoppers show I've ever been involved with, and I'm so proud of everyone because we managed to pull it off! I'd also like to point out how brilliant Danny's been as the cast liaison, he's been great at sorting things out throughout the entire process, and his frequent presence at rehearsals was always a pleasure and a reassurance. I wish I could do the whole H2S experience again, it was absolutely incredible and I love everyone involved!”

“this show was one of the best experiences with showstoppers and was exceedingly enjoyable, and it was amazing to put on such a fantastic show with such a wonderful cast and prod team!!!”

“The BEST show I have seen at uni. Seriously. I am so upset some reviewer only gave you 4 stars. Definitely should have been like 6.”

“I watched every performance and what was most impressive was how they were all consistently good, there wasn't a bad night from an audience perspective. Andy and Catherine deserve a huge amount of credit for pulling together such a phenomenal production. I liked that the show was ambitious in how much the prod team expected from the cast, but that they knew their expectations were reasonable for a cast of that calibre and how to achieve them. Also it did what it promised it would in the pitch. Which was to be a really slick show with cool dancing and big ensemble numbers. I really enjoyed watching it, and thought the cast were absolutely incredible. It was really nice to have a cast with a lot of new faces, and where there was no weak link. I think this has been a really really good year for showstoppers, every show has been great fun to watch, and H2S was a great way to top it all off.”