

# Curtains Feedback

Curtains was, from my point of view, someone who only saw bits and pieces of the show before it was on stage, an extremely successful and incredibly fun show and the feedback is in agreement with that view. The form was filled out by 21 different people: 14 cast, 5 production team, 1 audience, and 1 crew member. Some feedback here are issues that were brought up during the process and were rectified, but have been kept in anyway for future teams.

Most quotes are verbatim as how they were submitted. Where quotes have been edited, lines have been removed to improve how the submissions read and some lines have been removed which spoke about specific details and thus are not helpful to the society going forward. Identities of submitters have been made as anonymous as possible.

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## Rehearsal Process

The show was praised for feeling prepared and smooth, along with the whole process feeling very positive and a happy environment for all involved. Or, as one member put it, "I loved how everyone always was happy to see you. I couldn't stop smiling for the whole process." Particular praise was put of the preparedness of the show, with people saying "I think we benefited heavily from pitching and starting the show a bit earlier" and "I felt like once we'd reached intensive week it wasn't just a mad rush to get everything ready, but we were really able to focus on certain things, which was great." and "Doing runs and costume/prop runs early meant that everyone had a good overall vision of the show from an early point in the process, and made intensive week less hectic for everyone."

There were some places for improvement however, such as the team not quite fulfilling the stipulation from committee to take it easy with sporadic rehearsals for the first month or so, with some cast members commenting that it was "unnecessarily stressful due to pressure" at the beginning, especially those involved in other shows. Many of them will have auditioned under information that the show would have been eased into. This said, there were also positive comments that "The team skilfully manoeuvred around everyone's conflicting schedules... and made sure everyone was all caught up and on the same page within a few weeks of each other".

Another small criticism was that occasionally people felt like a lot of time was wasted in rehearsals "playing long games like Werewolves, meaning that people who didn't want to play or got out early on had to sit around for an hour and a half before we actually did anything." There is no issue with playing games, in fact it creates a fun and relaxed atmosphere, but when cast are only called for short amounts of time it can feel a bit of a waste of time, especially long games like werewolves.

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## Direction

There were so many positive things said about Charlie and Andy, who were universally praised for putting on such a slick creative show. Particular praise was directed at their commitment to characterisation, creating distinct and fleshed out characters for each performer, with one cast member saying "*I liked how involved they got in making the relationships between the leads important, you spend so much time on stage not as*

*yourself but as a group, that acting in that group became just as important as understanding your own character."*

Adjectives that came up often were "creative", "inspired", "clear and informative". It seemed that both directors brought different skills to the table, bouncing off each other well and complimenting each other's ideas. This led to an "efficient" rehearsal process, but many were quick to also point out how both Charlie and Andy "*were always up for letting us have a bit of a laugh*".

Some issues were raised, both during the process and on the feedback form. Many people were impressed with how quickly feedback was addressed, but, as was said earlier, issues from the start have been preserved in this feedback for future production teams. Some issues here and there included that "some of the blocking felt a little basic" and that "perhaps some workshops for background acting was necessary as sometimes cast were just watching each other and not reacting." One audience member also commented that "I think there were a few missed comedic opportunities, but I can't remember specifics. With a comedy, it is really important to squeeze every last bit of juice out of the lines."

There were other more substantial issues raised, including that of the dynamic, either between the two directors or between directors and the cast. One cast member said "Charlie often snapped at Andy in front of everyone else and undermined his ideas", another adding that this "was uncomfortable for cast members", adding however that "This was relayed in show liaison feedback though and was quickly rectified and overall the pair complemented each other and worked very well together." Other issues that were either acknowledged or rectified that applied to the directing team included making sure prod teams are on time for rehearsal to a much stricter degree than a cast member, and to clearly separate themselves from the cast through not being afraid to take a more commanding role, otherwise discipline is hard to maintain.

Another issue was how the team handled scenes that actors could have found uncomfortable, in this case the kiss scenes. This has been discussed with various people involved and some of it resulted from some misunderstandings. The parties in question know what the situation was and it wouldn't be useful or productive to relay it all here, apart from to highlight what lessons there are for future teams: Any sensitive material whatsoever should be handled as carefully as possible, and discussed at length to make sure that everyone involved is fully comfortable with the content and for all members of the production to be fully respectful of the cast members involved in the scene.

All in all though, people were hugely thankful for the amount of hard work, creativity, and energy both directors put into polishing the show.

### **Future prod teams:**

Ensure that no authority between production team members is ever undermined, but also be aware of responsibilities that some roles entail. Fully discuss any and all potentially embarrassing, upsetting, or awkward scenes.

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## Production

Many great things were said about the producing team of the show, the final product being particularly praised by many. Select positive quotes include: "*Charlie and Emily deserve massive props for making a great show on a smaller budget*", "*Charlie House, as usual, did an absolutely fantastic job with the profile pictures, design, publicity, and projection*"

things.” *“The promo video was really funny and set the tone for the comic and talent of the cast. The staging was simple yet effective.” “Joe was a great asset to the team and did a great job at sorting reviews” “Emily was active in coming to rehearsals, and had good ideas for people's costumes. The props were funny, well-done and easy for the cast to handle”.*

There were some mixed reports over the feedback, with some cast members reporting props arrived and were being used early enough, while others thought that the point that they arrived was too late. Obviously, getting props as early as possible is preferable, but not a lot more can be taken from this feedback.

Small issues here and there included: the piano not being fully considered in the blocking, therefor getting in the way in show week. One audience member commented that the costumes did not feel like they were suited to the setting.

There was, however, some criticism of Emily’s role in the team. I want to preface this with the acknowledgment that many people praised Emily’s skill as a producer, one person saying that she “is an experienced producer and a valuable presence” and that past producing by her was skilled and efficient. That said, a consistent theme among the feedback is that she was perhaps not prepared enough for the workload of the job. A quote that summarises the situation is as follows: *“Cast members, Charlie, and Annabelle ended up sourcing and swapping, and in Charlie's case buying, dresses, shoes, and other costumes. Even by show week, cast members were sewing up each other's costumes to fit, as Emily hadn't done so.”* While it is more than fine to ask cast members if they have a specific piece of costume for their character, so as to make it easier on the budget, there should be no expectation of a cast member having to design their own costume, and all swapping should be overseen and facilitated by the producer.

These circumstances were regrettable, but luckily it didn’t detriment the show itself. The stresses of the rehearsal process could probably have been prevented if Emily had acknowledged that she was struggling to find time to fulfil all her duties and requested, early enough in the process, to bring an assistant producer to help her with the costume and prop side of things.

## **Future prod teams:**

Try and get everything sourced as early as possible, and if any producer is feeling stressed or low on time then make sure to ask for help and recruit an assistant to help out. Communication and being up front with any struggles is key.

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## Musical Direction

So many fantastic things were written about the MD team that they couldn’t all be written down here, otherwise this section would go on for ages. There was particular emphasis, on how kind, helpful, and hardworking all three of them were. Select quotes include: “Megan, Ben and David were outstanding. They put in so much effort to teach this show in a fun and interactive manner and the band were brill.” “Ben and David both came into their own during the process too, and were a wonderful laugh. I think the band were the best big-band I've ever heard or worked with in the Annex, Megan did a ridiculously amazing job with them.” “[Megan] managed to explain everything clearly and concisely.” “Learning the songs was made easy by all MDs and they recorded our harmonies which was so helpful!” and “the three worked very well as a team”

There were a few small improvements to be made, including requests for all MD’s to be more “obsessive” over people getting exactly the right notes and rhythms, as someone felt

that that was sometimes lacking. Others requested “more structured warmups with reasons for why we are doing each exercise” and “It would have been more helpful if Dropbox harmonies were sung rather than played. Especially in Tough Act to Follow.”

One other note was that some members of the production felt that David could occasionally overstep his role as AMD, sometimes treading on the toes of Megan and occasionally the directors. As one person put it in the feedback, “It's crucial as an assistant that you [consult with the lead MD], as otherwise it leads to mixed messages. Only the lead MD should have the definitive answer to a question, regardless of its nature.”

That said, these were acknowledged as small issues on a team that was fantastic in every other way.

### **Future prod teams:**

Be sure that each member of the MD team knows their role, and to defer to the MD for all but the most obvious issues.

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## Choreography

The entire cast praised Annabelle so much for how hard she worked and how effortless she made the job of Choreographer seem. They said things such as: “*Annabelle is amazing in her ability to choreograph simple things to make them look professionally stunning.*” They also said she did a “*a great job at catering to people's abilities whilst also pushing them enough to improve tremendously.*” The videos were also particularly helpful, many said.

The only thing that people commented on on what could be improved was the liaising between Choreo and Music team. Some people felt that Annabelle “hadn't taken into account discrepancies there would be with the soundtrack and the P/V score.” This led to some moments of confusion in rehearsal that could have been avoided through more communication. The MD team also felt that they were needlessly criticised when it came to attempting to play the dance breaks, which was often the job of trying to imitate 12 separate instruments on just the one.

### **Future prod teams:**

Just to identify any differences between the provided score and different available soundtracks well in advance of teaching the dances.

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## Tech

Feedback was very complimentary of StageSoc, praising their hard work and professionalism throughout the process, which led to a very slick show. People were in particular very impressed with the skill of the sound guy Will Barber. One cast member said “Will Barber should also be commended for his job on sound, I couldn't believe it when I found out he wasn't just a fresher, but on his own, and the show sounded excellent.” Other praise for the tech includes: “the best i've heard the combination of band and cast for any show in the Annex”, “the lights were pretty and the colour co-ordination for certain characters was a beautiful touch” “I want a disco ball for all our shows.” “it was great that so many of them came to watch the show before tech run as it definitely made for smoother tech overall.” “The use of projection was really creative”.

There was a comment that read: "I do also think the future PA shows shouldn't rely quite so much on projection. It is arguable that it was necessary for this production with so many scene changes, but there are still some imaginative ways of using set or lighting instead."

An issue did present itself as the show approached tech run, where some people felt that Patrick, as TD, was not quite as professional as he could have been. He seemed to be slightly lax on some responsibilities, as he would sometimes be joining in with cast warm ups while other members of the tech team were setting things up and could have used the hand. He also left one of the tech days early to watch Not So Secret Cinema, leaving other people to fill the role of TD in leading the tech. Someone acknowledged that this "purely stemmed from his friends being in the show as well as just his general enthusiasm and I'm certain he meant well but it was oftentimes distracting to us as a cast." That said, his work was praised by many and lots of members saw Curtains as another incredible contribution from StageSoc.

### **Future prod teams:**

Ensure that if there is a job a tech member, particularly one with more responsibilities, could be doing, that they are present and doing it, so that all tech runs can run smoothly and efficiently.

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That's the whole feedback! All in all, while there were definitely places for improvement that would have made the process go smoother and with less stress, the final product was very well made and executed by all involved.