

Fame Show Feedback - 01/02/2018

Responses:

Audience: 6

Crew: 2

Cast: 10

Prod Team: 2

Total Responses: 20

Much of the show liaison sessions within rehearsal periods depicted a truly dedicated and professional production team, and post-show feedback was no exception. While there were some issues with the amount of time allocated to recaps, time issues have been prevalent with previous Freshers productions. However, from the feedback this seems to more of a minor point rather than a serious hindrance, as a majority of cast feedback felt that their time was efficiently used, with no reference to 'waiting around'. Considering previous Freshers feedback had cited issues with scheduling and timing, this is not an insignificant difference.

It is always worth pointing out that the nature of feedback means that, while every care has been taken to describe the general view of the process, feedback expressed may not necessarily be strongly representative of the entire cast, nor may cast be sure of what feedback to express. A recommendation for future feedback may be to include specific questions in regard to the rehearsal process over concerns that have been repeatedly voiced in the past.

Rehearsal Process:

A majority of feedback regarded the rehearsal process in a positive light; one respondent noted that they "always looked forward to them, and felt they were productive enough to make them worth going to."

One respondent did feel some recaps "may have been unnecessary", but stressed that they still felt it was overall "super fun". One cast member did suggest that a concise list is built upon in regards to who is called to rehearsal, to 'save a frustrated cast' – However, I was personally never made aware that such an instance (e.g. an entire cast being called when only a few were needed) had occurred during the rehearsal process, so I'm not particularly sure about what is being referred to; no other cast response referred to such an event.

One respondent did detail at length over rehearsal etiquette, citing that idle cast chatter meant that scenes may have taken longer than necessary. Rehearsal etiquette of a cast unfortunately is something that can highly vary from show to show, given varying factors such as cast sizes, the production team, and the nature of the show itself. The production team was aware of this issue and had taken steps through the show liaison process to vocalise the need for etiquette.

Direction:

Every response praised the efforts of both Victoria and Hope from both the cast and audience, with one response citing that they were 'experienced, calm, friendly, and professional', while another stated that while it was 'laid back', direction was clearly structured before rehearsals. A majority of cast responses stated that direction given was clear and easy to understand, although two responses stated that they would have preferred 'more guidelines'.

One audience member note that they felt there was a 'severe lack of blocking' in much of the production, with significant criticism of solo songs. There was also criticism of the characterisation, with them feeling that not enough work had been put into the creating cast characters, and that 'characters [felt] interchangeable'.

Given the short turnaround for Freshers show, understandably time for in depth character and accent workshops may be limited. While it may be possible for a character/accent workshop to be carried out closer to the end of the rehearsal period (i.e. intensive, recap sessions), arguably this might not be particularly useful given that an individual would already have had some idea of what sort of character or accent that they will have done.

Musical Direction:

Praise for Ben as musical director was near universal. Much of the cast stated that he was good at teaching harmonies, and the facilities of a harmony request form and recordings were really useful. One cast response simply noted under 'what they liked': Ben McQuigg. Their response for what could have been improved? Two Ben McQuiggs.

Some cast did respond that they would have preferred musical direction to have gone slower, and that recaps for songs could have been done as the song went along, citing that some people knowing their harmonies simply need to practise with everyone else. Another cast member seemed to echo this sentiment, suggesting that a certain group of people be called to rehearse all of their harmonies and songs so that they can be repeated and learned away from a whole cast rehearsal. Another cast respondent suggested that prior to a new song being learned, a sing through of the previously learned song would have been useful so that people knew what they can work on/request on the harmony form.

One respondent also said they would have preferred the dropbox to have included singing as well as piano, which echoes Curtains feedback - although understandably this may not always be possible.

Choreography:

Again, as with the feedback given about direction and musical direction, all respondents agreed that it looked absolutely great, with audience member stating that it was 'stunning', and 'a beautiful feature of [the show]' and 'made the show for [them]'. Cast members praised the patience and the friendliness of the choreographers, with several cast members praising the availability of videos and that they achieved the right 'balance' – that it was 'just complicated enough so that strugglers would still get [the dance]'.

However, some aspects in regards to the provision of videos could have been improved. One respondent noted that uploading the starting positions of the cast for each video would have been useful, while another noted that dances could have been filmed from the back (so there is no confusion about doing things in reverse. It was also suggested that dances be updated after changes to choreography.

One cast member noted that it would have been useful to have done a recap for a dance as a warmup (as a refresher), in the similar vein of their suggestion for 'doing a learned song prior to a song rehearsal'. While cast enjoyed Just Dance for a warm up, they also noted that they would have preferred a stretching exercise as well to ensure everyone is stretched out.

Production:

Praise was given for the design and posters, and noted that questions were generally answered in good time and that both Phoebe and Flo were friendly and well organised.

However, there was some issues in regard to when costumes had to be worn for the show; this was an issue that was brought up in a liaison session – most respondents noted that most cast members didn't realise that they were wearing the same costume for the whole show, and would have appreciated earlier direction in regards to costume, and that costume needs at the start of the rehearsal process came across as vague. One respondent suggested the provision of a costume list for the cast, although understandably this can be demanding for production.

There were some issues in regards to the timing of the sourcing of some props, some of which were only sourced in the dress run. Several jobs also needed to be chased up by production team members who weren't Producers, while those respective production team members still had to be in their charge of their own roles – communication and task management was suggested to be the issue.

Some audience members did indicate that they felt there wasn't enough reference to the time period of the 80s, with two responses amusingly noting that there 'were no legwarmers' – however, arguably this could have been up to directorial interpretation.

Tech:

Lighting was by far the biggest praise of all the tech, with particular praise to the 'tap off', and synchronised quick lighting changes from a majority of the audience and cast. Of note was the inclusion of the scaffolding bar and the disco ball used, with cast noting that the technical team acted professionally. The technical crew responses noted that they also enjoyed their experience.

Criticism was brought up about some of the decorum of the technical directors. The tech run apparently started later than anticipated, and it was felt that more pre-planning was required. Production team members also felt that the communication between the production team and TDs (as well as TDs themselves) could have been vastly improved, as they occasionally felt brushed off, or that they and the show were not being taken seriously. Another significant issue arose from the Saturday night's show, where the technical directors and crew were not present until 7pm – while the show did go on, there was some stress caused that could have been avoided..

From the audience there was criticism over the volume and balance of the sound of the instruments, specifically citing that the piano and drums seemed to be lost and too quiet under the dance breaks and that at times, they 'weren't really audible'; at times, it also meant that solo lines were occasionally lost under the band and chorus.

Other Comments:

There was a note that suggested that some scenes and dances did appear to be a bit crowded, given the limitations of the annex.

Quite sweetly, nearly every cast member ended their final comments with praise for the entire show and the production, with many expressing their hope to audition for other showstopper shows.

One final comment, which I have brought up in committee prior, was in regard to the show liaison process. They had felt that the show liaison sessions seemed to result in little progress and change for them, which mean 'a lot of wasted time', and suggested that shows begin with 'open feedback between cast and crew' and if people want to be anonymous, they can move to the liaison. To be fair, they felt that it was unnecessary primarily due to the good and honest connection between the cast and prod team.

Addendum (02/02/2018):

It is definitely a good thing when the liaison isn't needed for a show - however, after consideration by committee, it was decided that we continue to retain the liaison position in the same capacity. While it is good that this cast member felt that the position was unnecessary for Fame, not all shows may necessarily be frictionless - previous production teams and casts have found the process useful in communication when matters may not have been as easy to openly discuss. There is no way one can guarantee that how one may feel about the relationship between the prod team and cast applies to everyone, nor may people feel easy bringing issues up. We do find the time worth it to make sure everyone is alright, as much of the liaison role is concerned with the welfare of all of those involved.