

Sweeney Todd Show Feedback

Overall there were 14 responses (4 audience members; 5 cast members; 3 production team members; 1 crew member and 1 unknown).

Whilst the aim of this feedback is to describe the general view of the process, the nature of feedback (and the number of respondents), means that the feedback may not represent the views of entire groups, such as the entire cast.

Whilst ensuring the anonymity of respondents, the liaison has utilised direct quotes where possible.

Choreography

The choreography was highly praised, with members of the audience commending how diverse, different and 'spooky' it was, as well as how the chorus were used well to echo the emotions of the lead characters and the use of 'recurring themes' throughout. The production team were also very positive about the choreography, saying it was 'very imaginative and creative' and 'really good'. The feedback from the cast was also overwhelmingly enthusiastic, with Charlotte being described as 'amazing', an 'absolute gem', 'super patient' and 'very approachable'. Cast members also praised both the simplicity of the choreography with it being 'consistently challenging for some members', which they felt helped them improve.

However, some cast members mentioned that certain parts of the choreography were too complicated, leaving them discouraged and leading to there being changes to the choreography during intensive week which could have been anticipated earlier. Both members of the cast and the production team also felt that the company numbers were under-rehearsed, and could have used more recaps, which may be a reflection of latter changes. Comments were also made about a problem with knowledge of the space, with cast members saying that 'it would have been nice to have more of a focus on the actual performance space... as when we got to intensive week, we discovered that many of the dances didn't fit in the space we actually had'. Issues with the use of space were further reflected in comments from the audience, with one stating that 'some of the movements couldn't be seen, especially those on the floor' with a suggestion that a greater use of levels may have solved this.

Overall the response to both Charlotte and her choreography was overwhelmingly positive. Two comments from cast members which summarise this are: 'Charlotte was an absolute babe and did so well with all of us. She was super patient and really good at adapting choreo for our needs' and 'Charlotte was amazing! She was very patient when teaching the dances and knew what she was doing...The routines all seemed to relate to each-other in some way which gave a nice flow to the show and brought the numbers to life.'

Direction

Phoebe's 'clear' vision and 'unique' interpretation of the show were highly praised, with a cast member saying 'the clear image that the director had for the show was really well explained and a fresh take'. Her confidence in this vision was also noted, with the cast noting that plans were 'strongly demonstrated', and this 'clear vision' was also picked up on by an audience member. Cast members also stated that 'she was super helpful with any questions' and that 'it was really nice to receive feedback which was always constructive'. The use of the company was also praised, and cast members were happy that they had been able to have a lot of their own input into the characters, whilst recognising that 'her characterisation knowledge is impeccable' and that she ran 'some really helpful workshops to help us get into character'. Production team members also noted that 'the staging was used effectively' and that 'blocking was well thought-out'.

However, not all of the audience understood whether 'it was set as normal or trying to be scarier', and this confusion as the process progressed was echoed by the cast, who felt the initial interpretation was forgotten about and 'often not conveyed effectively' as they got further into the process. They also noted that there was some confusion as to whether certain blocking had been done prior to intensive week, and that 'at times it felt as though we couldn't ask questions about blocking' that had been done earlier on. One member of the cast felt that at times, it 'would have been nicer to see some more definitive direction'. Members of the prod team also stressed the need for consideration of the use of blood much earlier on in the process.

Overall, the feedback can be summarised by this quote: 'Phoebe did an amazing job by herself. Blocking was well thought-out and made full use of The Annex. For every scene each character's feelings and motives were discussed with relevant cast members and it really showed in their performances.'

Musical Direction

There was also lots of positive feedback for the musical direction team, with the audience saying it was 'generally very good' and a 'great achievement', especially in light of how challenging the score was. The cast also stated that the MD team really rose to the challenge as they 'all put in so much work to make sure we were as ready as possible', and 'were very patient when teaching'. There were many responses which highlighted their individual strengths, including that 'Ben was amazing at teaching the show', 'Ed had some really useful tips and techniques and always would support the whole cast', and that Molly was 'a complete star' who 'was so patient..., very supportive ... and was always happy to go through bits with people'. This positive response was also echoed by the production team.

However, cast members raised the concern that due to the difficulty of the songs, 'learning them was quite frustrating at times' and members of the MD team could become 'visibly stressed or annoyed which was not helpful' and which made members of the cast feel less confident. Responses also highlighted how 'some vocal technique would have been useful', although some members of the cast also found that when this did take place, this could lead to going 'off on a tangent', and that it was difficult when 'as a cast [we] didn't know our singing as well as we should have done and thus the time was more productively spent learning them'. They also noted that having 'some more regular, shorter recaps of songs', as well as running 'more segues' would have been beneficial. The audience also noted that there could have been better diction and tighter harmonies, as well as more practice of solo lines. A member of the production team stated that the musical elements of the show 'simply seemed too hard' for all involved and that this should potentially be taken into account the next time a Sondheim is pitched.

A couple of quotes that summarises the overall response here include 'Ben, Mollie, Ed. Is there really anything else I need to write here?' and that they 'honestly did the best job'.

Production

There was a lot of positive feedback for the production, as 'the aesthetic created was awesome'. One audience member said they 'enjoyed how the staging was laid out!', and this was echoed by the cast who though it was 'really exciting and helped us all get into character'. The advertising was also 'done amazingly' and the head shots also received great feedback, although it was noted that not everyone was included in the programme which should have been considered.

Many cast members commented on the 'amazing' costumes, and how they matched Phoebe's interpretation, however the audience felt 'the mix of modern and more old-fashioned costumes made

the production feel slightly confused'. Cast members also wished they had had more of a say regarding their costumes, and that they would have liked to be consulted at an earlier stage, as not everyone was comfortable with what they were wearing.

The props were also highly praised, with the cast especially appreciating that they were available whenever needed and really fit with the rest of the show. One thing to improve on was the 'choice of fake blood as ketchup', as it stained and the scent lingered, 'making the rest of the show slightly harder', although this is also a directorial note.

Overall the responses were overwhelmingly positive, and could be summarised by the quote 'the razors were siq man'.

Tech

There was a lot of praise for the lighting, with one cast member saying it 'helped immerse us in the world of Sweeney', and another saying that 'they enjoyed the uplighting ... super creepy', although some cues were missed. The set was also further praised here. There were several concerns with the sound however, as many audience members noticed a 'poor' mic balance, that often 'went uncorrected', and cast members were unsure about when their mics were on. However, StageSoc overall were praised, with cast members really appreciating that they were 'clear and prompt with helping us get stuff sorted'. To summarise: 'STAGESOC ARE GODS'.

Rehearsal Process and Other Feedback

One issue felt by members of the cast throughout the process was that 'there was a noticeable socialising gap between named characters/leads and the company', possibly due to company roles feeling larger than normal, which they want future production teams to 'be aware of and seek to prevent', although they weren't sure what could have been done to change this in this instance. Another cast member wished 'more segues and transitions' could have been run, and another wished people would have been quieter in the green room as conversations were easily heard on stage. There were also 'some feelings of dissatisfaction' from the cast as 'certain members of the cast appeared to not have gone over their lines, blocking or choreography', although this resolved itself during intensive week.

However, the main issue picked up on by members of the production team and cast was the 'stressful' and 'disorganised' rehearsal process, largely caused by poor communication between the director and other members of the production team and cast. Members of the production team commented on this lack of communication, as 'we had no prod team meetings throughout the process' and the director did 'not act as a leader and frequently talked down to other production team members'. This created a 'frosty' environment 'which is not the atmosphere Showstoppers normally creates' and made 'a lot of the Sweeney process unenjoyable', as well as meaning 'the show did not reach its potential'. Some members of the prod team also felt this from 'an MD'. They felt this could have been prevented by remembering that 'everyone is meant to be a team', 'listen[ing] to members of the prod team more' and through getting an assistant director to 'discuss decisions with'. They also noted that 'a lot of jobs were passed off to an MD or producer by the director that weren't anything to do with them', which may have further increased tension within the prod team.

Sadly, this lack of communication amongst the production team was also noticed by the cast, particularly when it came to the costumes being appropriate and the use of fake blood. Cast members also felt that the way 'the rest of the crew' were spoken to made them feel uncomfortable, and that there 'needs to be more respect between prod team and cast'. A comment from a member of the cast which really summarises this is: 'I ... on the whole, very much enjoyed the process. However, as a cast member, it was frustrating to see that passion for the project within the prod team was being lost

as the process went on. From my perspective, Phoebe did not do well in her role as the leader of the production team; there was quite a lot of tension and misunderstanding between members evident to the cast and as this was also raised in previous feedback, I would like it to be considered during the Edinburgh show rehearsal process. This being said, I had a wonderful time overall.'

However, the audience 'loved the overall quality of the show' and someone commented that it was 'Amazing. Cast were incredible, production team incredible.', which is a testament to how proud everyone should feel of what they achieved. As one cast member summarised, 'This has been another great experience as well overall. The fact that I have a lot to say should be a reflection that the work put in by the prod team made me care about the show and the people for me to be honest and open in this feedback'.