

Hamlet: Post-production report

26 October to 6 November

Background

The show was due to run originally in spring 2020, but was delayed due to Covid-19, which eventually had a huge impact on the show – delaying the production, causing drop-outs from both cast and crew, and resulting in reduced audiences. The show was directed by Kris Hallett and produced by Teri Mohuiddin.

This post-production report is compiled using comments submitted by members through the online survey and directly. Twenty-four members gave feedback. Text in bold are direct quotes.

This is the first time we have presented a post-production report in this way, so this report is slightly experimental. We want to develop this further and all feedback on it is welcome.

Summary

Clearly, members who watched the show really enjoyed it. There was a very positive reaction to the vision, and this positivity was shared by the cast, who gave a warm response about their involvement.

This was obviously a tough production for everyone involved. It's great to have another director completing their first show with the club, but Kris obviously had many Covid-related issues, as well as adjusting to the challenges of directing within the company for the first time. Illness, injury, pregnancy, and other issues caused cast changes throughout the production – even during the run. Kris, the cast and especially the backstage crew, should take a lot of credit for managing these changes and responding to the challenges that were raised.

No show is without criticism and there were also some questions raised about particular elements of the show, highlighted in the feedback. There were also some concerns raised about the way the backstage team were managed and the way some Covid measures were implemented through the production. There were also cast dropouts, which need to be looked at.

Aside from the show, there was lots of praise for the bar and the FoH – as well as some questions being raised about the bar and the Covid measures for customers – something we need to improve upon for next time.

Areas of the club where improvements and work were required, include:

- Training
- Bar
- Membership
- Front of house
- Construction

Feedback

The general audience response was very positive about the whole Hamlet experience. People commented on a **bold, vigorous presentation with high production quality**. Some called it **terrific** and **awesome**, and there was a general sense that members and audiences were very excited to be back at the studio watching live theatre again.

Positives include the **stage crew as secret service**, which **did help cover scene changes**. The **acting was great** and in particular there was **praise were the principals**. Also, the **technical aspects (light, sound, staging) all complimented and enhanced what the actors were doing**.

The reaction to the new bar was very positive – generally, people felt it **looked great**, but some did comment that it **lacked character**. *[Bar redevelopment – the bar is yet to be fully decorated, and we hope to make it more characterful for the next production]*.

People commented on the **smooth operation** on entering the studio, with staff being described as **professional, friendly and helpful**. People liked the new drinks ordering system (and the prices), but felt it needed some clarification and wondered whether it would stay permanently – and someone also asked for a **spirits licence** *[Bar – this is something we're restricted from doing currently, but would happily challenge if anyone wants to take this on]*.

The iPad and contactless systems were popular, as was the 'free' programme; but some did want to buy a programme with cash so a float might be necessary for future shows *[Bar/covid measures/FoH - we removed that for this show due to Covid, but may reinstate it]*.

It was pointed out that we did have an issue finding people to volunteer for the production. Whether this was something to do with Covid-19, the fact that it was a two-week production, or some other reason needs some further investigation *[FoH/volunteering - we will look at how we find volunteers as we develop our membership offer and structure, but at present we need people to volunteer]*.

Covid-19 was clearly an issue throughout this production, and it remains so. In the week prior to the show case numbers rose rapidly and the committee felt it needed to act to ensure the safety of the members and audiences, and to ensure the show could continue. Measures were implemented for FoH and for cast and crew. Where these were implemented, they had a positive effect. However, they weren't always implemented, and this did cause some confusion and concern.

A few members fed back that there was inconsistency in what we said we would do, and the way the measures were implemented at FoH: **Expectations made very clear re mask wearing and bar service beforehand; once I was there I wasn't sure if it was quite as clear** *[Covid measures/box office/FoH - we will work on this for next time to ensure the message is clearer and that stewards are more aware of what is expected of them]*.

The production was clearly badly affected by Covid, and people commented that it was **difficult to plan without a rehearsal schedule**. However, the response from cast and crew was that we: **mitigated the risks of Covid-19 spreading throughout the cast and crew by taking lateral flow tests on a regular basis**. One Covid measure we introduced was to open windows in the studio, and someone commented that the **hall could have been warmer**.

Generally the feeling among cast was positive, with cast members talking about the **warm spirit throughout...everyone involved worked so hard in difficult times to put on a brilliant show**, and the **close-knit cast that showed Kelvin at its best**. One member of the production said that **everyone**

worked as a team, and asked if we could **open the bar** on occasional nights during the rehearsal schedule instead of people going to the pub.

However, there was a different feeling among the crew, with some saying they felt **lesser to cast** and felt they were **harshly criticised for their errors**. By the tech, there were some areas that were unready or which no-one had picked up, and cast and crew changes as a result of Covid, had definitely had an impact. Crew members described it as **frustrating, tiring and stressful**. The issue with the stage paint, for example, was highlighted and an area **that could have been sorted beforehand**.

The lack of people for construction nights was also highlighted, and **we need to push for help on construction**. [*Construction/membership/training - we need to do some work to encourage more construction crew*].

It seems that the tech was certainly a fraught experience with **more confusion, heightened feelings and stress around than usual**. This was partly due to Covid, partly due to the big break between shows, and partly to **having a new, inexperienced director for our first show back**. There was a lot of **nervousness** and a feeling of being **under-rehearsed** – however, it was **fine once the show got underway**.

The **stand-in actors were excellent** and Pete Spence was singled out by a couple of people for his contribution and that **he deserves a special award**. We are certainly lucky to have individuals so prepared to get stuck in and take things on with little complaint when required – and to do it so well.

A few **technical issues, minor points** were highlighted including: **a creaky stage**, the fact that **traverse meant some problems with blocking**, the **tech operators could be heard**, and a couple of people felt **the ghost effect had a mixed effect**. Some found it difficult to hear the words, and also found it odd the effect stopped in the middle.

Several people commented on the firearms and duelling. The **handling was inconsistent and unrealistic, which was especially jarring against the otherwise very high quality of the production**, and suggested that, as a club, **more work needs to be done** [*Training/membership - we'll look at introducing some additional training*].

One member email about **helping with the production but never heard anything back**.

Ultimately, someone said it was a **thoroughly memorable experience, which really showed Kelvin at its best**. And on a final positive note, one audience member said:

Fabulous! The acting was great, the set was superb, the costumes perfect and the direction excellent. It was our first time attending a Kelvin Players production and we enjoyed it so much, one of us has now become a member!