

## 2018 jan 14 - An integrated concert of dance, drama & song from Mushroom

This month, I went with my husband to watch Mushroom Theatre Company's annual show at the lovely Towngate theatre in Basildon.

MTC "Friend Like Me" review by Joan

MTC Facebook Page >>



## 2016 Nov 20 - Mushroom Theatre Company Annual Show

Mushroom Theatre Co – “Sunshine in my Pocket”  
by Joan

It has been a while since my husband and I have been able to visit Mushroom Theatre Co but we knew that this year's MTC annual show was one we didn't want to miss.

This year they were doing the show in a proper theatre and what a fabulous venue the Towngate Theatre, Basildon is.

It was nice to meet some old friends and check out some familiar faces. I even spotted a familiar curly chap that is usually my focus on stage. After all the chatting and hugging and catching up in the foyer it was time to take our seats. We had fabulous seats right in the centre of row F.

The lights dimmed and the first routine was “Believe” This was a truly emotional tear jerking routine that took my breath away. Five incredibly talented girls including the beautiful Charlotte in her wheelchair.

Then the full company performed “I got Feeling”, I won't go through the whole set list but what I will say is that every single routine was performed to perfection.

One routine called “The Bench” saw a new star of MTC. It was Red the dog. He lapped up the applause.

One of my favourite pieces was “Slave to Technology”, which is a reflection of the way our lives have become. Quote: “Look up from your phone, shut down the display. Take in your surroundings, make the most of today.”

At the end of the show every single Teen & Tot dancer, singer, and actor were rewarded with the whole theatre on their feet. A truly well-deserved standing ovation.

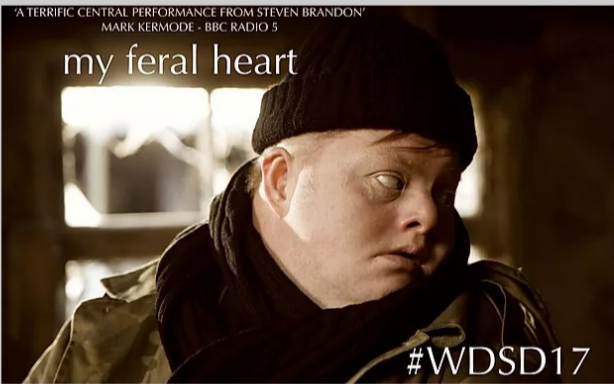
Well done to everyone but how the heck are you going to top this next year?



[Lee Mead @leemeadofficial](#)

Absolutely blown away by @mtcmushroom's show tonight. So, so proud. So many special moments and the kids were brilliant. Well done all xx

## 2016 - ‘My Feral Heart’ Staring MTC own Stephen Brandon



Click the picture to [Read more](#)

I met the star of this film on my very first visit to 'Mushroom Theatre Company' at its previous home on Lubbards Farm. Even then, Stephen shone as I chatted to the group that were rehearsing a drama about the consequences of dropping litter. Joan

## An Exciting Opportunity for Equal People Performing Arts

EPPA/MTC have a unique opportunity to fulfill one of their major long term objectives: to provide not just space, but the opportunity for students to receive a recognised educational award, something that many other establishments and educators have previously told them they would never achieve. But EPPA/MTC do not believe in the word "never".

Rather, EPPA/MTC believe *everyone* has the ability to achieve; they just need help. In fulfilment of that, Equal People Performing Arts now have the opportunity to become a registered Unit Award Scheme centre that can teach, assess, and award nationwide recognised certificates in a whole host of subjects at varying levels.

By becoming a UAS centre, EPPA can provide the necessary teaching, facilities, and assessors to award certificates in subjects such as improvised dramatic arts, understanding contemporary dance design and creating props. As you are probably aware a GCSE is the amalgamation of several "units" studied and assessed over a 3 year period. While they will NOT be able to help a student complete a full GCSE, the UAS accreditation will allow EPPA to award recognised certifications for each unit completed.

EPPA will also be able to help student teachers who are still at school achieve UAS certificates in things like mentorship, work experience, customer services, performing arts, dance, etc., which they will be able to place alongside their full qualifications (and equally as valid) on their CV's to prospective employers, further education establishments, and apprentice schemes.

So . . . Because all funds raised to date by EPPA/MTC have been earmarked by the Charity Trustees for fixing the flat roof, finishing the corridor, and levelling floors - all of which are vital (and practical), they have reached out to Meadaholics for specific fundraising of the additional funds needed so that the formal inspection, registration, and training for this project can go ahead.

Therefore . . . our first goal in this fundraising is £200, needed by mid-September. Let's work together to achieve this goal - and possibly win this beautiful A4 photograph as a bonus!

## 2015 June - A Day at Mushroom Theatre Company

by Lin, visiting from Los Angeles

We have heard so many lovely, inspiring things from Joan about Equal People P.A./Mushroom Theatre Company - and finally I was able to visit and see for myself what the excitement is all about. And I must say, I came away with such appreciation for the love and dedication of everyone associated with this wonderful organization. It's so difficult to put into words what the day was like, but I will try.

We arrived just after they opened the doors on Wednesday morning. It was a beautiful, sunny day and the mood inside the studios was just as sunny and bright.



Wednesday mornings is the PALS group - Performing Arts Life Skills. We all sat in a circle and they introduced themselves and told us why they like coming to MTC. Comments ranged from "I love Penni and seeing all my friends" to "I love to dance" and even to "I love Lee Mead!" Well, I had to admit that I love him as well . . .



When Penni introduced me, she told everyone I came from Los Angeles "where the movie stars live". At that, one young man asked if I know Kim Kardashian!! I had to say I have never met her since we don't live in the same part of Los Angeles - but everyone laughed at that one, including me.



I was so happy to meet Steven Brandon, who auditioned and was chosen to star in the film "My Feral Heart". (Watch for other MTC staff in the film as well.) I can't wait to see it!

If you are interested in more information, their website is

<http://www.myferalheart.co.uk>

All of these young adults were just exceptional - so full of life and so obviously enjoying their time at MTC.



After the class, Amanda Hart gave Joan, her husband John, and me a tour of the new building, as well as an overview of their future plans. They have done so well financing Studio 1 and 2, the lovely reception area, and even an office for Amanda (lol)

But it was sobering to see the amount of work left to be done. The facility has such great potential, it just made me more anxious to do what we at Meadaholics can to support financially the fulfillment of their dreams. As Amanda said, this is not just a project for now, but one for the future with a long life ahead. It would be wonderful to see them make progress on these long-term goals. (\*Not-so-subtle hint\* xo)

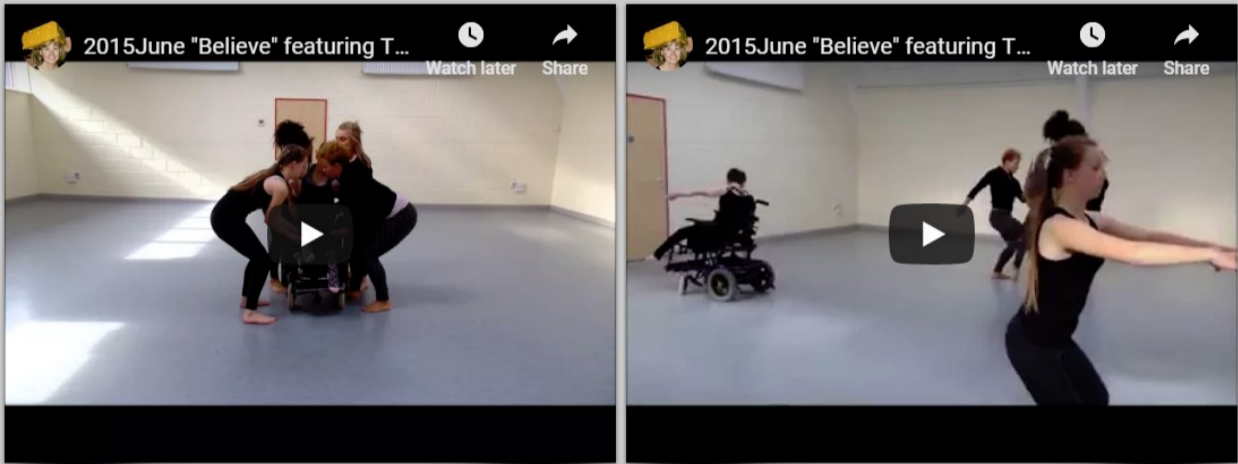
JustGiving-EPPA/MTC

Corridor	
Item	Costing
Vinyl sheet flooring and skirting	£1,721.00
Studio 2	
Item	Costing
Air Conditioning Unit (Supply and fit)	£3,243.00
Studio 3	
Item	Costing
To bring walls etc to standard of Studios 1 & 2	£3,292.00
Vinyl sheet flooring and skirting	£1,982.00
Lighting	£1,880.00
Insulation to shutter/double door opening/double doors & furniture	£1,443.00
Suspended Ceiling	£3,685.00
Air Conditioning Unit (supply & fit)	£3,243.00

Corridor	
Item	Costing
storage cupboards/ furniture x3	£633.00
Studio 1	
item	
Multi format stereo system inc. speakers & microphones	£1,500.00
Studio 2	
Item	Costing
Floor work mats x6	
Mat Trolley	£446.40
Various support wedges, shapes & sized floor mats & storage trolley	£122.36
Various free standing multi sensory equipment inc. bubble tubes	£568.76
Smart board interactive panel system	£1,000.00
Multi format stereo system inc. speakers & microphones	£2,934.78
	£1,500.00



However, they still have a lot of work to do in the present and, at the time of my visit, they were preparing for "One Brick At A Time", their fundraiser in support of Equal People Performing Arts which was held this past weekend. Since the show has now happened, I am able to share these amazing rehearsal videos of a very special dance called 'Believe' and featuring The Witchettes.



This was so moving - I can only imagine what the actual performance was like. Joan will have to tell us all about it.



The dance - and the show - reflect the true theme of Mushroom Theatre Company: that everyone, no matter their level of ability, is able to move . . . some more gracefully than others, perhaps, but move freely and confidently. It's about *"how far you can stretch . . . your soul."* What a wonderful gift for all of us who may feel self-conscious or awkward. These young ones feel accepted and appreciated for who they are and that is a truly great gift. They can teach us all.

One of the parents and huge supporters of EPPA/MTC is Steve Westrop. He wrote a lovely thank you and you can read it:

One Brick at a Time

I can't begin to thank Penni, Amanda, Julie, and all the beautiful people I met at MTC. My heart is full more than I can express.

I also want to thank Joan and John for taking me to Rayleigh that day. And for the fish and chips and Rossi ice cream we enjoyed for lunch at Southend-on-Sea. :) The whole day was just perfect - one I will never forget.

The one thing expressed over and over by everyone at MTC was that they love to have visitors - any day, any time they are open. Please, please, please go see for yourself what they are all about. I promise you, you will be changed by the experience.

We plan to add an MTC Calendar of Events to the MTC update page on the website so everyone can be aware of activities coming up and can attend when you are able. All of these events are fundraisers for Equal People Performing Arts and so the public are invited and welcome.



All Photos taken by Lin xo xo xo

# Mushroom Theatre Co/Equal People Performing Arts Charity ball Saturday 2nd May 2015

The day of the fund-raising ball had arrived and we set off to Rayleigh, Essex.

We arrived early so that we could visit MTC and collect the precious Blue Beanie Raffle prize. It was a hive of activity with dance classes going on and staff making the final preparations for the evening, As I was showing my guests around I spied some glitzy table decorations that the kids had made.

My guests and I went off to Southend for lunch while the staff and pupils made their way to the Mill to set everything up for the evening.

Finally the time had come and we were all dressed in our ball gowns and suits and ready to party.

A convoy of 3 taxis took us from the hotel to the venue. There were already a lot of people there when we arrived and the staff that we saw earlier were now glamorous ladies ready to dance the night away. (Where do these ladies get their energy?)

After a lot of chatting, drinking, and meeting people we made our way to the Meadaholics table. The meal was delicious and the wine glasses were filling up nicely.



Penni gave an introductory speech thanking everyone for their support and she had a little tear in her eye. She then introduced the singer/entertainer who serenaded us throughout the meal. Every time he sang a song that we are used to hearing Lee sing we just looked at each other and smiled.

There were envelopes on the table with raffle tickets in them. We took the tickets and replaced them with a £10 note which was collected just before the draw.

My number was first to be picked and I won a wine hamper. :)

The prizes ranged from a makeup bag or notebook to a DVD player or a weekend hot tub hire - all generously donated.

After the raffle came the disco and this was the time for us all to get up and dance and let our hair down.

I went off to the powder room with another Meady fan and when we returned to the party we noticed a throng of people around a curly-headed chap.



Lee had turned up to show his support for his favourite charity. One of the MTC volunteers took us by the arm and led us over to where Lee was. He was just about to introduce us when Lee said " I know these two ladies." #blush

He was very surprised how much money his beanie had raised saying "it only cost me a tenner" LOL

That was the cue for us to get Penni to draw the Meadaholics raffle winner.

She picked No107. Lee was excited and asked "Who got it?" I said Colleen but he misheard me and thought I said Colin. He then said "YES I have pulled!"

"Correction, Mr Mead", I said. "Colleen is a lovely lady and one of your many overseas fans."

He was amused to know how many fans from all over the world had bought a ticket.



After the drawing, we left him to get on chatting to his friends. As you can imagine Lee's appearance caused some excitement and he graciously posed for photos and chatted to pupils, parents, and guests.



All too soon he said his goodbyes and left as quietly as he had arrived.

But for the parents and staff the night was still young and we danced until way after midnight

It was truly a fun night and maybe next year you might join us?



There is a serious side to all of this frivolity. The new building's running costs are substantially higher and there is still a lot of work to be done.

The third studio\theatre needs funding as does the sewing room and sensory room.

We all hope that you will continue to give whatever you can to help dreams come true.

All Photos Courtesy of Joan and Equal People Performing Arts/Mushroom Theatre Company

Just Giving

## Mushroom Theatre Co/Equal People Performing Arts Grand Opening Sunday 25th Jan 2015

This was the day that we had been waiting for, the official Grand Opening of the new building.

Our journey to Rayleigh was perfect and we arrived at Brook Rd at 11am – right on time. There was no mistaking the building, which had been decorated with balloons, bunting and ribbons.

Quite a lot of people were already there when we arrived. Penni's husband was on "parking duty" and he helped us unload our boot-full of goodies that kind people had given us for MTC. #thankyou

The place was full of parents and children, local councillors and dignitaries. The volunteers were showing groups of people around and their pride in what they had achieved was evident. I was also bursting with pride.



One Lee fan was busy in the kitchen preparing food. She had baked the most delicious cakes and I heard some very complementary comments about them as I wandered by the laden table.

Some of the youngsters were standing in the reception area holding platefuls of canapés

I was handed a brochure and to my delight I read this on the first page:

*"It is in no doubt that the kindness and generosity of everyone involved, not least Lee and all his supporters, have helped us to reach this point. There is a long way to go and whilst the time dedicated and funds raised have enabled us to reach this point, the work is far from complete and continued support is still vitally important."*

The truly amazing part is MTC have achieved all this from local people with no government grants or outside assistance, other than from Lee fans fundraising. Much of the money has been raised by them doing local events such as quiz nights, fun runs, dinners, etc. Lee fans are a small but vitally important part of the fundraising - even more reason for us to be proud.



A new idea that they have to keep us all informed is that for £5 per year, or £10 VIP membership, you will receive a seasonal fundraising newsletter and priority booking for shows and events. Keep an eye out here or on the MTC website for details.

Mingling in the throng of dignitaries I spotted some familiar curls. Lee was there, chatting away and looking very proud.

Then it was time for us all to go outside for the official "ribbon cutting".

Penni got very emotional giving her speech. She told us that one of their long term supporters had died a few days earlier and she dedicated this day to her. When it looked as if Penni was about to break down in tears, Lee put his arm around her to show comfort and support.





After the speeches we went back indoors and the kids were able to try out some "taster classes" while the rest of us mingled and chatted. Betsy joined in one of the taster dance classes and it was lovely to see her proud daddy and grandparents watching her through the glass window.



Our friend, Nisha Nayar, had come with us and the kids got very excited when they saw her. (She is an actress and plays "Elaine the Pain" in the CBBC children's program "Tracy Beaker".) She was extremely impressed with the work that MTC are doing and she has offered to support them in any way that she can.



I had a very brief chat with Lee and he asked that his sincere thanks be passed on to all of his fans who had contributed to make this day happen.

There is still work to be done. They have plans to make the rear of the building into a theatre.

Of course that means we have to continue with our fundraising but wouldn't it be wonderful to go to the opening of their very own, all inclusive theatre!

Hmmm, now there is a thought . . .



Once again, thank you to Lee Mead for introducing us to such a wonderful group of people, to Mushroom Theatre Company for their constant inspiration, and to you, my fellow Meadaholics, for your continued support.

We have a few fundraising ideas coming up - I know MTC can continue to count on us all.

Joan

All Photos Courtesy of Joan and Sunny-Mead

