

“CAN YOU FEEL IT?” PRESENTED BY MUSHROOM THEATRE COMPANY

The Towngate Theatre, Basildon – Saturday 23rd March + Sunday 24th March 2019 - Show Review

Hello everyone!

Joan was very busy the weekend of the latest MTC show rattling donation tins for EPPA at one of Lee's concerts so I've been asked to step into the breach to pen you a website show review!

Firstly, introductions! I'm Elaine and a parent of a daughter that has been dancing since the month of her 3rd birthday. She joined MTC when she was 4 years old and I'm now proud to say that she is a teenager and senior dancer with the Company. During that time she has performed in every single show, and I've had the privilege of watching them as well as all the other events that MTC and EPPA participate in.



The benefit of attending classes over such a long time is that as parents we get to watch our children develop and grow from little tots, finding the confidence to carry out a few simple dance steps on a big stage in front of a packed audience, to the older cast members performing the most accomplished of dance routines in all genres of dance. Not forgetting that they become long standing friends in the process too.

I absolutely love watching the primary dancers and thinking that was once my baby and vice versa, being a parent of a young dancer and thinking “wow” with hard work, dedication and fun along the way, will my child be able to perform at the high standard of the current crop of seniors and adults?

Every single number in the shows are brilliant – whether it's primary, junior, senior, adult dancers, boys or girls, with or without special educational needs. You simply don't get this at most dance schools as they don't operate with an ethos of inclusivity to all. This makes MTC shows unique.

So, the latest show: "Can You Feel It?" The answer is yes. At the end of the shows (and I was lucky enough to see both performances -once is never enough to take in all that is happening on this stage with such clever choreography) you will have FELT something. In fact, you'd have FELT everything as all the different numbers are so unrelatable to each other that one moment you can feel intrigued, the next sad, the next happy, the next taken back to a different era and the next back bang up-to-date! You can wonder at the message the dance, song or drama piece conveyed – there are always thought- provoking numbers on a range of issues cleverly expressed through musical theatre. There is lots of comedy and "laugh out loud" moments. You truly experience a rollercoaster of emotions in two hours, and no matter how much you're into music there'll have been a piece of music you haven't heard before.

Some special moments and achievements at "Can You Feel It" for me - the opening and finale numbers were amazing. To see the whole cast of over 135 performers on stage at once singing and dancing took some doing! That's about 50 more performers than typically take part and the curtain reveal to show all the younger members was wonderful.

There were some great stunts in this show from complicated street dance manoeuvres to all kind of practised lifts. Here I'm thinking of "Dracula" by the Modern Dancers of various grades, "Lemon" by Senior Street, "Burden" by Senior Dancers and as well as the climax to the show "Body Electric!"

There was inventive use of props to great effect – the latex gloves worn in Money combined with the armography artistry and clever lighting created a "wow" moment. But minutes before I was laughing at the funny sketch "What is It?" by the Senior Drama actors – "it" was a retro rotary dial up telephone!! This comedy piece contrasted completely with another drama segment about the modern use of "social media" and issues surrounding teenagers, group texting and bullying/exclusion themes.

There were some very quick changes from performers in multiple numbers back-to-back – lots of staff and licensed chaperones volunteering their services backstage to pull off such a large-scale production. On stage, some performers and carers helped, as always, as "buddies" to assist those with additional needs achieve their best. And I love that singing numbers are "signed" performances. All different skills and talents are put to use and evident in a MTC show.

The costumes really work with the numbers whether it's a group entrance in the official MTC uniform polo top, casual "street" type clothing or the delicate little ballerinas in "Morning" or tappers in "Barbie Girl." The clothes really help to set the scene which means lots of long hours, needles and thread for Pat Wood and all the wardrobe/costume department. The costumes really stood out in the penultimate number "Burden" – the darkness of the black outfits and masks set against the soft pink hues of the "family" members.

I noticed this time how many more boys were taking part in the show, more than there usually would be and all were excellent, whether it's the youngsters getting their groove on or older boys supporting certain girls in lifts or playing musical instruments. That's got to be a good thing!!

I love seeing Red in each show, the founding owner's much-loved dog.

It was nice seeing Abbie sing in her last full show "I'll be Here" with the senior dramatists alongside her, but my favourite song this time was "Seasons of Love" from the musical "Rent." And the lyrics of the end of that song say everything I feel about MTC shows – it's a work in progress, each show better than the last (which you don't think possible at the time!). It's a "story that never ends, a time to celebrate, remember a year in a life of friends."

Thank you to Penni Bubb and the whole Mushroom family for another great show, and Joan for entrusting me to write the 2019 show review. If you haven't seen a MTC show yet, put it on your 'bucket list' for next time! You won't be disappointed and you'll get an insight into why Lee Mead is so passionate about the organisation and takes his role as Patron so seriously.

