

January 10th 2009

**Lee's last day playing 'Joseph' at the Adelphi Theatre
Muck-up Matinee**

The story begins at Saturday lunchtime in Maiden Lane, as told by our resident superb 'journalist', Toni!!

Prior to the show Maiden Lane was just the most amazing atmosphere as we all waited to pay tribute to the man who has come to mean so much to us. It was so, so bitterly cold and we would not have suffered for any other than the great GO, but suffer we did and with great humour and spirit too.

At one point Alex, Helen and I spotted none other than Rhydian on the corner by 'La Tasca'. 'How random!' we thought. He was on his phone at one stage and I heard from someone (no idea who and no idea if it's true) that he was actually speaking to Lee and asking him if he was coming in a car or was he prepared to brave the crowds.

Shortly afterwards Lee did appear like magic from the alleyway down which we have galloped so many times, **and oh!** He did look so incredibly radiant and totally in his element...not intimidated at all by the huge crowd which immediately enveloped him.

We had come to salute him and he had come to say thank you to us one last time and I really think he was just absolutely revelling in it all. Gradually, gradually, inch by inch, he made his way to the stage door, shaking hands, waving and smiling.

And then, fittingly, Lee Mead stops the traffic!
The taxis and vans were backed up down Maiden Lane and they were tooting impatiently, but no one was budging. Nothing was going to hurry these few moments. Some of the female cast members hung out of the windows and shouted 'We love you Lee!' It may have been cold out there but the warmth was emanating from every single person and it was an absolutely overwhelming experience.

(Photo break - Experience continues below)







Oooh - See anyone you know? ;)







And Toni continues her story the muck-up matinee!!

Nothing was to prepare me for the matinee, with all the laughter and emotion, it really was a roller coaster! Alex and I were in row J of the stalls. Lee's first appearance instigated a standing ovation from the vast majority of the stalls and the look on his face as he was hit by the wall of sound made me 'lose it' all the way through 'Any Dream Will Do'. Lee coped extraordinarily well with all the little jokes played upon him by the cast and any 'show virgins' probably wouldn't have spotted what was going on (apart from the beard which was truly ,truly hysterical and quite obviously was totally not supposed to be worn!).

Potiphar's black gloved hand had a life of its own and he had to use his other hand to make it point when he wanted it to and again when he wanted it to clench. Had I not been watching Lee so closely I'm sure I would've seen other things he did with it! Very weird!

Initially I thought it was the lights making Lee's legs look white, until I realised they had left his socks on for CED. As he strolled around the stage trying to look pensive it did look so funny for him to be in his stocking feet. Once he'd finished his phenomenal rendition he sat down with his back to the audience, peeled the socks off, screwed them into a ball and then tentatively approached the cast at the back and threw them through the bars!

Butler and Baker were just so, so funny! They had strange red and white marks on their cheeks and the Lee badges on. When they held out the paper and pen for an autograph (Fantastic timing)

I think Lee was so conditioned that he initially went as if to actually sign them! He almost lost it for a second, regained his composure, but then cracked briefly again as he put his head through the bars and caught someone's eye in the first few rows of the audience. How he sang through that I don't know!

When Lee appeared in the beard many of the cast were struggling not to laugh, particularly the girls. He looked absolutely bizarre - like a really young boy playing at dressing up. You could barely hear the line 'My service to Pharaoh has begun.....' as the audience were chortling so loudly!

As Lee knelt down to face Pharaoh with his back to the audience he pulled faces at Michael and was smiling broadly! The beard's band on the top of his head kept slipping and as he went up the steps he yanked it backwards, pulling his curls straight at the back and lifting the beard high under his chin. I wondered if he was actually going to be able to sing with it like that against his throat, but he managed.

I was sad not to see Dean in Lee's final show, as I think he would've milked the audience mercilessly and the rapport between Lee and him is always great to see, but Michael, I who I haven't seen before, did a sterling job and it was interesting to see his take on Pharaoh.

After Lee had been kissed by the guards and the girls, Russell made as if to do the same, but then pulled a face and walked away to his chair, shaking his head and muttering as if he just couldn't bring himself to do it!

And so onto the mega mix, where a pumped up Lee whirled for his life, followed by the cast who were obviously enjoying the atmosphere.

Everyone I could see was standing and the noise was deafening. I cried and cried and laughed and cheered all at the same time and it was the most fantastic, fantastic end to the show- or so I thought.

But next to come was the evening performance which was to be even better.

Some scrum photos from after the matinee.....(apologies if any of these are from the evening scrum)



