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For Immediate Release

TRP STORIES: Olivia Frost (Funky Llama)

“Funky Llama gives me something to get up for. It gives me a really good drive and a passion to help others”



WATCH - Interview with Olivia Frost: <https://youtu.be/ddTgwjEigDI>

Olivia Frost is a member of Theatre Royal Plymouth's Funky Llama and for the past few years has gained confidence and skills through the project. She is now an advocate for people with disabilities in Plymouth.

Funky Llama is an engagement project that helps disabled adults to develop key life skills and gain confidence, through music, dance and drama.

As part of TRP's annual Funky Llama Appeal, Olivia explains what difference the project has made to her life.

Olivia is 26 and uses a wheelchair but has not always had a disability.

“My disability started seven years ago and I was diagnosed with PoTS (postural tachycardia syndrome) and FND (functional neurological disorder) which can affect me day-to-day, whether that's with my speech or mobility.

"I was a resident at Dame Hannah Rogers School when I was invited to a few Funky Llama sessions. From there, it's totally opened up massive, massive avenues for me.

She recalls attending the first session:

"I was a little bit nervous. I'd never really been in a group with other people with disabilities. It was all new to me and I didn't know what to expect. I sat in the corner and just listened.

"From there, I began getting involved and eventually my diary was completely maxed-out. There aren't many opportunities for people in wheelchairs or who have got disabilities, so it gave me a real sense of purpose."

Not only did Olivia start attending Funky Llama sessions but she became part of the Far Flung Dance Theatre Company, the Coffee Cup Choir, and the Funky Llama steering group.

Around 15 people, some with disabilities and some without, are part of the steering group, leading the direction of Funky Llama. The team create new ideas for social events and provide access support and guidance across TRP.

Olivia is passionate about helping to make the theatre a more inclusive and accessible place:

"We're like one big family really. It actually gives me something to get up for. It gives me a really good drive and a passion to help others.

"There are many disabled people out there that don't yet know about the amazing opportunities available through Theatre Royal Plymouth."

During the pandemic, Funky Llama sessions went online, allowing those taking part to keep connected once a week, at such an isolating time.

40 regular 'Lockdown Llama' online workshops took place and there were 63 steering group sessions held virtually during the same period of time.

Funky Llama has become such an integral part of Olivia's routine, she struggles to imagine life without it:

"I'd probably be very lost, if I'm honest. I wouldn't have a clue about some of the accessible opportunities out there.

"It's really hard when you've come from a place where you were able-bodied and then have a disability, because you don't realise there are so many barriers for people in wheelchairs.

"With all the work that Funky Llama does, I really hope that inclusion and accessibility in Plymouth progresses.

"I was quite a confident person anyway, but since coming here, my confidence has shot through the roof. It's really aided me with my mental health too."

You can help Theatre Royal Plymouth to continue inspiring disabled adults through the world of theatre, by making a donation to our Funky Llama Appeal today.

Visit theatreroyal.com/donate or call 01752 267222.

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For further information please contact the Media and Communications team on mediaandcommunications@theatreroyal.com / 01752 230439

Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP) is a registered charity providing art, education and community engagement in Plymouth and across the region. It engages and inspires with the aim of touching lives as the South West's principal centre for performing arts. Theatre Royal Plymouth presents a year-round programme of world class productions on all scales.

Theatre Royal Plymouth works with partners to understand the challenges people face accessing the arts, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged people. It creates pathways that are genuinely accessible to those who might otherwise never get to engage with the arts and collaborates to co-create and co-author work that represents the community, creating the space needed for people to tell their story in their own way.

Theatre Royal Plymouth is the UK's largest regional producing theatre with a focus on embracing the vitality of new talent and supporting emerging and established artists. It collaborates with a range of partners to provide dynamic cultural leadership for the city of Plymouth.