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## Olympic inspiration

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A YOUNG woman who appeared in the Olympic Opening Ceremony has described how she was inspired by performing alongside descendants of suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst.

Jen Brown, 23, who played a suffragette in the spectacular ceremony, said performing live in front of 80,000 people – plus an estimated billion people watching worldwide – left her speechless.

Jen's sister Lizzy, 20, also made an appearance as a dancer in the [Olympics](#) closing ceremony, much to the delight of their mother Elaine.

Jen, from Smallfield, said: "It was absolutely amazing, I can't even begin to explain it.

"I was one of the suffragettes in the first section called 'Pandemonium'. It was really interesting because we had two of Emmeline Pankhurst's descendants with us, her grand-daughter and great-granddaughter, which gave the story a lot more meaning to us."

The suffragettes, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, campaigned for women's right to vote in the early 20th century.

The opening ceremony, held on July 27 at [the Olympic Stadium](#), included a staged extravaganza of British history including celebrations of the industrial revolution and the NHS.

It was created by Slumdog Millionaire director Danny Boyle who despite being responsible for the most hotly-anticipated shows in living memory was able to meet and greet his volunteer performers.

Jen said: "I met him quite a few times, he was lovely, he made so much time for everyone. He came and spoke to all the volunteers which he didn't have to do. He was so calm and collected."

The Brown sisters were lucky to have the support of employers Waitrose in Horley to fulfill 100 hours each worth of rehearsals.

Jen, who performs with Gatwick-based panto society 'Gaps – can you feel it', added: "A lot of people were asking about it and much though I wanted to tell them we were sworn to secrecy – though a lot of it went out in the press.

"We had two [dress](#) rehearsals with 40,000 and 60,000 audiences, but the real thing had 80,000 plus all the press and TV. We had never seen the James Bond stuff before so I was literally speechless.

"After our part we were meant to leave the stadium but we were able to sneak in and watch the athlete's parade after people left. That was the icing on the cake really. It was a once in a lifetime experience."

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