



A CASTLEMAINE CHRISTMAS *THEATRE IS A GIFT!*

We're not in the business of sales and "stuff" (unless we're on a hunt for the perfect prop!) but we've noticed that there is a welcome shift in the air as we approach Christmas this year. Partly due to environmental concerns and partly because some priorities have been reorganised, perhaps, but people are talking about offering "Experiences" and "Memories" to loved ones as gifts. And we can't think of a better experience than going to the theatre!

More than that, too, is the importance of Theatre as an activity that brings us together in a variety of ways; in the making of a production, in the viewing of it and during lively discussions afterwards. Don't even get us started on the cultural importance of storytelling, expression of ideas, exploration of difficult themes...

Consider giving tickets to a play this Christmas; you'll be giving your recipient a wonderful time and you'll be showing your support to those of us who are in the business of making Theatre for our community!

(Keep reading for details and background about our next production, volunteer opportunities and more!)



Mark Penzak is the head writer on *Walk With Us* (below, with Suz Kalk, producer)

Headliner wanted to know more about the inspiration behind the newest CTC production and the process of putting it together, so we asked Mark a few Quick Questions



Walk (and Talk) with Mark Penzak

(Headliner) Given that you are a writer yourself, why did you choose to recruit other writers for this project?

(Mark) This production was conceived during the height, or perhaps that should be 'the depths', of the covid lockdowns. At that point the live-arts had been effectively shut down for over a year and there was no way of knowing when theatres would reopen. The concept of this production then, was to make an outdoor show, performed to small groups that would be as safe as possible and unlikely to be cancelled. I also thought it would be good to bring together as many theatre artists as possible to celebrate and renew. Simultaneously though, many theatre-makers, myself included, were tired. It's hard to keep the motor running with so much uncertainty. Asking five writers to compose short scripts meant that each wasn't overburdened and that it would be hopefully fun. (Having fun is one of the production's important goals.) Technically speaking, having different voices and a gender balance was always going to create a more interesting production than if I'd written it alone. I'm also hoping that this might encourage more writers to consider creating scripts for CTC.

(HL) Why do you think a production like this is needed now?

(Mark) I find creating theatre, difficult though it is, the most enjoyable of activities. With the lockdowns, I also realised that theatre provided me with much of my social life. After almost two years of lockdowns we need to get back on to the stage. Skills lose their edge with inaction and over time, the 'I couldn't be bothered' factor seems to accumulate.

For the audience, I believe that if the community has ever needed theatre, it is now. With Covid, we're in a situation that's unsettling at best and for many, it's traumatic. Our society is more fractured than two years ago. Theatre is a superlative tool for reflecting, contemplation, creating, uniting through the experience of being in an audience and giving pleasure. Hopefully *Walk With Us: Untold Castlemaine* will achieve all of those roles.

(HL) What are you excited about for this production?

(Mark) I'm excited by the scope of the production. The writers and directors were asked to create a performance, optimistic but not blind to faults, that left the audience at the conclusion feeling a little more happy to be alive. That sounds pretentious but really, when you think about it, that's the ultimate intention of theatre. We are aiming to achieve one of theatre's ancient functions – to bring the community together and to reflect upon a common experience. The style of promenade performance was selected from necessity but it also replicates an ancient tradition of 'walking the boundary'. When I lived in Scotland it was a tradition in some counties, or even individual farms, to annually walk around the perimeter of the property. It was an act that reminded everybody of what they have. Our journey through Castlemaine serves the same function. We are reminding ourselves of what we have, and also what we need to care for and protect.

Seriously, Why Not Book Tickets to This Show for Friends & Family

“Walk With Us: Untold Castlemaine” is the CTC current project in development, inspired by the streets of our town and a sense of locals reuniting after months staying at home.

Head Writer, Mark Penzak and Producer, Suzanne Kalk, have brought together 5 writers, 5 directors and a gaggle of daring actors to bring to life some of Castlemaine’s intriguing characters and stories:

- ***Into the Mix*** by Samantha Bews, directed by Michelle Dorian
- ***Market Calls*** by Toby Heydon, directed by John Willis
- ***Judicial Murder*** by Graham Pitts, directed by Jeff Jones
- ***The Billy Cart Race*** by Lisa D’Onofrio, directed by Sally Guildford
- ***Common Ground*** by Kevin Cook, directed by Bridget Haylock.



Mark Penzak, head writer on “Walk with Us” with a couple of costumed collaborators (Photo by Leonie Van Eyk)

Be escorted by flamboyant characters through the backstreets of Castlemaine, stopping in secret locations to be entertained by five short scenes. Based on true events but not a history tour, this is a surprising, fun theatrical journey that asks us to consider: what makes a community strong?

Approximately 70 minutes and 1km, the route features 2 short flights of stairs but accessible-options are available (please advise in advance).

Designed for adults but suitable for all ages.

Performances: 21, 22, 23 & 28, 29, 30 Jan at 7.30pm starting from the Market Building

BOOK NOW! CLICK LINK BELOW:

[Walk with Us: Untold Castlemaine – Castlemaine Theatre Company](#)

We’ve even included a Christmas E-Card with this newsletter to forward to your loved ones with your digital tickets... simply send it along with a joyful message and a link to your Trybooking confirmation.

A Cuppa with Sally Guildford

After listening to Sally Guildford's performance as Antonia, the scheming sister of Prospera, in our recent radio version of *The Tempest*, we wanted to hear more from this accomplished actress. A morning cuppa in a local Castlemaine café seemed like the perfect opportunity, and we covered a lot of ground as we talked.



Sally Guildford, preparing to direct for CTC

Sally has only recently moved to Castlemaine after stints in Northern NSW and Melbourne, where she has worked as a professional actor in a variety of settings, including medical training and theatre-in-education. Through the storytelling medium of classic plays such as *The Crucible*, *Medea*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Bombshells*, she enjoyed facilitating workshops about themes that are important to her.

"I'm not a teacher, but it gave me a chance to talk with students about things like sustainability, feminism and the environment," she says. "We performed (Hannie Rayson's) *Extinction* at a school in Colac, which was really amazing, because the play is set in the Otways."

These experiences seem to naturally progress to a unique performance piece that Sally has created, and which she hopes to produce for Castlemaine audiences soon. Called *Wild Vacancies*, she describes it as an opportunity for audiences to connect with nature, to slow down and be present. "Part of the deal is that there are no mobile phones allowed," she explains. "I provide sensory tools and prompts as we walk together."

Meanwhile, Sally seems to be the perfect choice as a director for the CTC's next production, ***Walk with Us: Untold Castlemaine***. She is working with a small team on a play written by Lisa D'Onofrio, called *The Billy Cart Race*, and particularly looks forward to the collaboration aspect of the project.

The opportunity also appealed because it contains "lots of different flavours", which might also describe a lovely brunch and roving conversation with Sally herself. Thanks for the chat, Sally!

It's probably not surprising for those who heard *The Tempest* to learn that Sally is actually a voice expert and once ran a business that specialised in vocal exploration, including voice techniques for performance and in everyday life. Having completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts, studying drama and performance art, she travelled to the south of France to undertake an intensive course at the Centre Artistique International Roy Hart. It's a place dedicated to research into the nature and meaning of the human voice, and to its application in life and art.

"I couldn't believe it," Sally says about the experience. "Here I was learning and working with people who I had read about and written essays about."

Volunteer Opportunities

CTC has openings for volunteers in two key areas and we would love you to become involved in our new project!

Walk With Us: Untold Castlemaine is coming in January, it involves numerous short plays over six performances, and we will require helpers. Experience is not required; we will provide information and support. It's a great introduction to what we do and beginners are welcome. You can assist us in the following areas:

Backstage

If you would like to be part of the process of making theatre and can be a flexible helping hand, then this is the role for you. Jobs may include taking notes, helping to manage props and costumes, assisting with time cues and moving things. We will need you to attend 2 key rehearsals and all performances.

Backstage Dates required: *Group Rehearsal: January 16, 4pm. Dress Rehearsal: January 20th, 6.30pm. Performances: January 21st - 23rd plus Fri, Sat Sun 28th - 30th, 6.30pm. Performances will start at 7.30pm and run about 70 minutes, with pack-up to follow.*

Front of House

If you enjoy dealing with members of the public and if you are confident with offering assistance or making transactions (for example, directions, ticketing or drinks service) then this is the role for you. We will support you with basic training for your tasks, but if you have or intend to get an RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol) Certificate, we'd love to hear from you. We need you for as many performances as you are able to attend and we will create a roster of FOH volunteers in advance.

FOH Dates required: *January 21, 22, 23 and January 28, 29, 30 from 6.30. Performances will start at 7.30pm and run about 70 minutes, with drinks service to follow until up to 10pm.*

If you have not already put your hand up but you are interested in helping, get in touch right away! Send an email with an indication of your area of interest and your availability for the dates mentioned above.

We're also happy to answer any questions you may have about volunteering with us. We would like to form our team by Saturday 18th December

Contact us at: castlemainetheatreco@gmail.com

Pssst...Do you follow CTC on Social Media?

Yes, you're a Mailing Lister (thank you!) to receive Headliner and stay informed about acting and theatrical opportunities that come our way, but if you'd like to keep up to date behind the scenes, you can find us on the Gram and Facebook too.



[@castlemainetheatreco](https://www.instagram.com/castlemainetheatreco)



[@castlemainetc](https://www.facebook.com/castlemainetc)

The Tempest “Exclusive Listening Event”

Once again, CTC managed to find a way to innovate during a pandemic, presenting its radio version of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as a covid-safe listening event. Tickets were in such demand that we were forced to schedule a second show, which also subsequently sold out. The venue was the Goods Shed in Castlemaine; spacious and airy, and audience members reclined on beanbags below a floating parachute, onto which light projections were cast. (Director, Kate, described the projections by saying they: “...gradually changed as the evening wore on, starting off looking like undulating opal, then a glittering starry night.”) It was a dreamy affair and the feedback from attendees was positive indeed!



Above: Tim, Elizabeth, Simeon and Toby at the event



Thanks again to Castlemaine State Festival for providing the venue, Arena Theatre Company for the loan of bean bags and parachute, Greg McGeachin for rigging the parachute, Tim Ratcliff for the lovely projections and to Mary at Super Hero Banh Mi for lending us some stools. Thanks to Elaine and Lindsay for running our bar and to all the CTC cast and crew.

Etty St Update

Rehearsal Space Refit & Revival

At the end of 2020 we were thrilled to hear that Mount Alexander Shire Council had granted us some funding through their Community Partnerships Grant Program, to refit the Etty Street Rehearsal Studio and the Community Meeting Room that we use for our committee meetings. We partnered on the application with Rotary and 3's A Crowd. Matt Sheehan from 3AC went about an extensive period of research to find the best equipment for the job – which included a new lighting rig, sound system and some lovely black curtains.



By the middle of 2021, we had paid for the new kit and were all ready to head down to Melbourne to pick up our orders, and then lockdowns struck! So all our lovely new equipment had been languishing in Melbourne since June! Finally last week me and Remy Brannon, one of our awesome techs, borrowed Gary McClure's van (thanks Gary!) and headed down to Melbourne to collect our booty. It was a miserable, grey, rainy day, but luckily Remy is always good for a laugh, and we take great delight in teasing each other, so the drive was made bearable with lots of laughter.

Remy first worked as a tech on a CTC show back in 2015, for *Monkey and the Monk*, and now he's professional theatre tech with Bendigo Venues and Events! We had a long journey ahead of us – first stop was ASL Systems in Bayswater, where Johnny helped Remy strap the lighting bars onto the roof rack. We loaded up the lights and 'looms', and then headed down to Cheltenham to Imported Theatre Fabrics where Kevin helped us load up our new curtains and tracks. Out the back of ITF I found our mate John O'Donnell who is Head of Production for Castlemaine State Festival. It's a small theatre world!

By this time it was late in the day, and we were starving. There was nothing around except Moorabbin DFO, so we headed in to see what we could find. Turned out we found some awesome burgers – the veggie burger was particularly amazing – and lovely hot chips. It was a great gastronomic surprise. We headed home and arrived back in the Maine about 8pm, where committee member Toby helped us unload. Phew! What a big day. Stay tuned for news of the install.... X Kate

Thanks for reading **Headliner**
Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to
seeing you around town early next year

Let's make a New Year's Resolution;
2022 will be a year of local theatre!