



Prattle

From the President



Welcome to the April Prattle.

Eagle eyed readers of The Prattle may have been surprised that only nine committee members were named in the last edition of this newsletter. The reason for this is that, very sadly, after the AGM, our secretary Jodi Gray resigned from the committee due to work commitments. This was a great blow to us all as Jodi was a very valued member of our team and had been for many years. Her wonderful sense of humour and her knowledge of the company will be sadly missed. As we had just held our AGM and realized that the voting results had been so close the committee took the decision to invite Jenny Boyle, who had missed out on a place by just one vote, to join us. Jenny has now assumed the role of Secretary.

As is usual for this time of year – unless it is 2020, of course – we are in the final stages of the rehearsals for our annual musical. We have a committed - and very talented – cast from the leads to the ensemble and an excellent production team. We held a very successful programme photoshoot recently and I must thank Lindy and Janet for their hard work in getting the costumes prepared and also the Production Managers Kerri and Susan for making sure everything ran smoothly. This year the photos were taken by Buck Cerridwyn, a newcomer to the company, and he has done a great job. The set is practically complete, despite it having to be dismantled last week when the shearers needed the Woolshed! Costumes are practically finished, the programme is being prepared and publicity is ramping up. In short – we have a show!! At the time of writing audience numbers are restricted to **271** due to Covid, so buy your tickets now in case you miss out.

Also due to Covid restrictions we are unable to hold our usual gala opening night or raffle. As a change the committee has decided to invite the opening night audience to dress in Abba costumes for that performance! Who knows – there may be a prize for the best one!

Until next month,
Viki Wright
President, BPLTC.



New faces on the committee



Jenny Boyle—Secretary

You are a member of the Mamma Mia! ensemble. What made you decide to audition for the show?

I loved the songs in Mamma Mia, it brings back happy memories of years gone by.

Have you done much performing in the past?

Apart from childhood song and dance routines around Victoria, I've done a little with our local golf club ladies Revue each year.

Why did you decide that this was the year to apply for the committee?

Having recently stepped away from a career as a chef, I have much more time to fulfil my other passion of performing arts.

Which musical and/or play would you love to perform in?

Hmmm, maybe Dusty or Anything Goes!

You've performed in varying roles for BPLTC in the past; is there a particular role you enjoyed the most?

My favourite role would have to be as Jessie in calendar girls.....having said that I also enjoyed funny money, in fact any on stage role I find awesome!

After many years with BPLTC and with many other commitments why have you decided to join the committee now?

If you need stuff done you always ask a busy person and that's me. However I always put my energy where my heart is.

You have worked both on stage and behind the scenes in varying capacities. What is your favourite aspect of theatre work?

I like the role of production manager, I love organising and I suppose being a bit bossy!

Which musical and/or play would you love to perform in?

Would love to play the vicar in the Vicar of Dibley! Any Maggie Smith role would do me.....



**Di Dixon—
Membership
Secretary**



**Maddie Clark—
Minutes
Secretary**

You've performed in varying roles for BPLTC in the past; is there a particular role you enjoyed the most?

My favourite role would have to be Mother Abbess in The Sound Of Music. It was an opportunity for me to learn and grow as a performer and I am so grateful!

After many years with BPLTC and with many other commitments why have you decided to join the committee now?

COVID-19 has made me think about the things I am truly passionate about. The community atmosphere that BPLTC has created is something I missed during the lockdowns. I want to make a greater contribution to that community.

You have worked both on stage and behind the scenes in varying capacities. What is your favourite aspect of theatre work?

My favourite aspect of theatre work is exploring and creating a character in order to bring them to life. But I also must say that becoming a choral trainer for Mamma Mia has been an incredible experience.

Which musical and/or play would you love to perform in?

I would love to perform in Wicked. It's a show which carries such a pure and heartfelt message.

How long have you been involved in theatre and in what capacity?

I have been involved in theatre for many years, but mainly as a supplier to theatre and TV companies.

What is your performance history? (ie have you been in any shows)

In my twenties I played bass guitar and percussion in two bands. As a theatre supplier my company has been involved with many popular shows – Mamma Mia!, Les Miserables and The Lion King to name a few.

What made you decide to stand for the BPLTC committee?

After 40 years of professional theatre and television work the time has come to step back, but this way I can still be involved in theatre.



Roy Rooney



Committee Matters

Executive Committee

President: Viki Wright
Vice President: Susan Gibson
Secretary: Jenny Boyle
Treasurer: John Crawford

General Committee

Maddie Clark
Di Dixon
Rick Edney
Janet Liddell
Peter Martignoles
Roy Rooney

Company contact details

Postal

P.O. Box 1732
Bairnsdale VIC 3875

Phone: 0476 956 349

E-mail: bairnsdaleproductionline@gmail.com

Website www.bairnsdaleproductionline.org

Facebook Search: Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre Co. Inc

The next committee meeting will be held on 14th April.

If there is anything you would like discussed at this meeting, please get in touch with the company on bairnsdaleproductionline@gmail.com

Dates for your Diary

NOW!

Tickets available for Mamma Mia!

14th April

General Committee Meeting

7th May

Mamma Mia! Opening night!



May opening for Mamma Mia!

After all the anxiety and heartache caused by COVID-19, Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre Company is roaring back to life, with its postponed 2020 musical extravaganza, *Mamma Mia!*, on track for a triumphant return to the Forge Theatre stage in 2021.

Ticket sales for the much-loved ABBA-themed musical are almost back to normal, with Forge Theatre management now opening up 75 per cent of available seats, and hopes are high that restrictions will be all but gone by the time the show opens in the first week of May.

"It's been tough on everyone on the *Mamma Mia!* team," production manager, Susan Gibson, said.

"From the 30-strong cast to bond members, to all the backstage production team, all of whom have been effectively 'on ice' since March 2020, when the pandemic forced theatres across Australia to close doors."

"But we all knew it was something that had to be done and that we'd come back better than ever – eventually."

The cast and crew have been rehearsing the show since the start of the year, albeit with severe restrictions on distancing, masks being worn, and strict monitoring of rehearsal attendance and health and hygiene precautions. But now the restrictions are gradually easing, and the pace of preparation has quickened, to the point where some of the most iconic songs and dance sequences from the show are just about 'performance-ready' and the rest of the show is a fair bit behind.

"Something as drastic as the COVID lockdown had an inevitable effect on morale, but as soon as everyone walked into the rehearsal space at the start of the year, it was clear that they were committed to making up for lost time, and making *Mamma Mia!* the best show we've ever presented," Ms Gibson said.

All that remains now is for East Gippsland audiences to do what they have always done – support the region's brightest and best



Dancing queens of *Mamma Mia!*, Kate Young, Vikki Wright and this week.

performance artists – and have a great night out – by going to the Forge Theatre website and booking early for the season, which runs from May 7 to 23.

"I know we say this every year but *Mamma Mia!* is one of those shows that pulls huge audiences, and the lockdown has made people hungry for live entertainment, so bookings are really taking off," Ms Gibson said.

"It's even possible that ten shows won't be enough – so the old line was never more apt: book now, or risk missing out."



THURSDAY, MARCH

Mamma Mia! is all set

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2021 | BAIRNSDALE ADVERTISER.COM.AU

The famous pop musical *Mamma Mia!* is back on track after a year's delay due to COVID-19, and is now set to open at Bairnsdale's Forge Theatre for a three-week season, starting on May 7.

It's a huge relief for the cast and crew from Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre Co, who were well into rehearsals for the popular ABBA-themed musical when the pandemic forced the closure of the Forge, along with every other theatre in Australia.

"It was a big disappointment for many reasons," co-director, Mike Smith, said, "but at least because quite a few cast members were unable to commit to the delayed season, so we were forced to pull out."

"The upside of that is it's given a new group of actors, singers and dancers a chance to join the 2021 line-up."

The 12-month delay has also provided a bit more time for the behind-the-scenes crew to although even that work has been hampered by COVID restrictions.

The impressive *Mamma Mia!* set is the brainchild of co-director and lighting designer the real thing by long-time theatre tragic and Production Line's chief set builder, Peter and Martingales, Peter has graced the Melbourne Comedy and musicals, notably as the stage his talents have also been on display in a number of spectacular sets.

"The *Mamma Mia!* set is especially large, two-storey, taverna and full-width rostrum that are a permanent feature on-stage, plus a smaller revolving platform that permits two other scenes – Icarus' Donald's bedroom and a cafe – to be brought in and off quickly."

"I've had to call in a bit of help to get this one completed as time for the resumption of rehearsals," he said.

"But the major construction work is all done, leaving only the 'skinning' of the outer walls, painting, and detailed 'dressing' to be completed over the next three months."

Along with all the rapid-fire costume changes (including some outrageous ABBA-style outfits), being overseen by experienced costumers Lindy Kennedy and Janet Liddell, and the almost non-stop parade of ABBA hits under the baton of musical director, Victoria Shaw, *Mamma Mia!* promises to be a dazzling spectacle for Forge audiences.

Bookings have re-opened via the Forge Theatre website, amid confidence that COVID restrictions will continue to ease in the coming weeks.

Regular Production Line patrons may find the process a little different from what they're used to, having to register for tickets before they can be allocated, but as Mike Smith said, after more than a year without any way of getting a theatre fix, "it'll be well worth it."

Mamma Mia! opens at Bairnsdale's Forge performances over these weekends, closing on May 23.



The master and his apprentices – *Mamma Mia!* set builder Peter Martingales (left) with assistants Tony Porter (centre) and Ian Hall. (rs)



Choreographer Cacey Davidge (right) leads the ensemble of *Mamma Mia!* through a rehearsal of one of the show's many dance sequences. (rs)

Ticket sales take off for Mamma Mia!

With just more than two months to go before the return of full-scale musicals to Bairnsdale Forge Theatre, the producers of *Mamma Mia!* are over the moon with the response of East Gippsland audiences.

"Ticket sales have taken off since the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, to the point where some of the 10 performances may be booked out well ahead of the May 7 opening night," production manager, Susan Gibson, said.

It's a great relief to the huge cast and crew of *Mamma Mia!*, who have endured the nightmare of the being postponed 12 months ago at the onset of the pandemic, and the ever-onset of the pandemic, and the ever-present worry that a second wave might jeopardise the 2021 season of the show.

But now it's all steam ahead, with dozens of actors, singers, dancers and technicians putting in many hours of rehearsal, alongside the myriad backstage workers who help get the show to the Forge Theatre stage.

"Last weekend we ran the first act of the show from start to finish, for the first time," Ms Gibson said. "We were delighted with how smoothly it has come together."

"The run-through went like a dream, everyone rose to the occasion, and I dare say it's almost performance-ready."

The Bairnsdale season of *Mamma Mia!* from May 7 to 23, is the biggest show by far to hit the Forge Theatre since COVID regulations closed down the Australian theatre scene.

"The response from local audiences since bookings opened may well be an indication of how much they've missed their regular 'theatre fix' – or perhaps it's just the enormous popularity of *Mamma Mia!*," Ms Gibson said.

"But it's also a timely reminder that anyone wanting to catch this production, had better book early. We'd hate anyone to miss out!"

Bookings for *Mamma Mia!* are available via the Forge Theatre's website.

And dot dot DOT!





The *Mamma Mia!* cast get back into rehearsals with a difference – all appropriately socially-distanced. (PS)

Super troupers hit the stage – again

ABBA fans and all lovers of musicals will be delighted to hear that Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre company has recommenced rehearsals for 2021's COVID-delayed production of *Mamma Mia!*, coming to the Forge Theatre in May.

Over the past fortnight around 30 members of the *Mamma Mia!* cast have been gathering for the first time since March, among them half a dozen newly-drafted performers who have come into the line-up to replace actors, singers and dancers whose 2021 commitments forced them to pull out of the show.

"It was a huge disappointment for everyone when the show was put on hold, but heartbreaking for those who were only available in 2020," *Mamma Mia!* production manager, Susan Gibson, said.

"But as the saying goes, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good and the delay has provided a golden opportunity for a new group of performers to join the team – and they've fitted in as if they were

always on the team."

Under the guidance of musical director, Victoria Shaw, choral director, Bek Axe, and assistant choral director, Maddie Clark, the cast pitched into singing rehearsals with gusto, revising work already done on the raft of ABBA hits that have made the stage musical such a huge success around the world over the past two decades.

The restart of rehearsals has enabled many cast members to renew old friendships, fractured by the COVID lockdown – perhaps none more important than the on-stage mother-daughter relationship between Viki Wright (who plays Donna, the role made famous on film by Meryl Streep), and Ruby Young, who plays Donna's feisty and impulsive daughter, Sophie.

For Viki it's a triple-edged sword, as she finds herself suddenly busier than ever, in her multiple roles of lead actress, member of the directing team, and president of Production Line – quite apart from her

'day job' with Australia Post.

"I don't mind at all," Viki said.

"I've wanted Production Line to produce *Mamma Mia!* for years, so having to wait just 12 months more is a small price to pay for the opportunity to play the role of a lifetime.

"And it's great to be working with such talented people as Ruby, and all the other great performers who'll be up there singing and dancing their hearts out in May."

Mamma Mia! will run over three weeks at the Forge Theatre, and bookings are already open online via the Forge website.

Some seating limitations are currently in place as Victoria slowly eases its COVID lockdown, but it's likely that these will ease further in the coming weeks and months.

Whatever happens, the cast and crew of *Mamma Mia!* are going full steam ahead, and are determined that 2021 will more than make up for the year that never happened.



Two of *Mamma Mia!*'s many stars, Ruby Young (Sophie) and Viki Wright (Donna), get together – 1.5 metres apart – at rehearsals. (PS)

16

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021 | BAIRNSDALEADVERTISER.COM.AU

Bringing joy to the world

Joy Ingram never set out to be a star of musical theatre – the self-effacing pianist is content to let others shine.

But ask anyone who's been involved with Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre Company's many successful musicals, and they'll quickly tell you what a hero Joy is.

When rehearsals for the COVID-delayed season of *Mamma Mia!* resumed at the beginning of the year, Joy was back on deck, as she has been for many years, as the company's rehearsal pianist, patiently working her way through countless rehearsals with old hands and beginners alike.

"The rehearsal pianist is a vital ingredient in every musical production," *Mamma Mia!*'s musical director, Victoria Shaw, said.

"She has to sit at the keyboard, paying close attention to the singers and dancers, adjusting her playing to suit the pace of the rehearsals, and – in the early days at least – constantly stopping and seamlessly dropping back into the score as demanded by the progress of the rehearsal.

"And all with a smile and endless patience. Honestly, we'd be lost



Joy Ingram (left) leads a group of *Mamma Mia!* ensemble members through another ABBA hit during rehearsals: Peter Burslem, Timmi Skinner, Jenny Boyle, Michelle Worsley and Chloe Wagner. (PS)

without her."

For Joy, the piano has always been a part-time hobby, with her days taken up being involved with the accounts

for the Bonaccord-Ingram produce group in Bairnsdale. But there's little question that her skills would be the envy of many accompanists in the

professional scene.

"I do it for the fun of it, and for the pleasure of working with all these people," Joy said this week, in a rare

break among the stream of ABBA hits that are the heart and souls of *Mamma Mia!* the musical.

"I get to watch a great team of amateur performers, some of them raw beginners, as they blossom into great performers, and then I get to play keyboards in the pit band for the full season of the show. Who wouldn't enjoy that?"

The 13-piece band that Victoria has assembled for *Mamma Mia!*'s Forge Theatre season includes some of East Gippsland's most skilled and versatile artists.

They'll need to be: ABBA's music has been widely acclaimed since the 1970s as some of the best – and most challenging – music to hit the international pop charts.

Mamma Mia! the musical includes no fewer than 23 of ABBA's greatest hits, and promises to have audiences literally dancing in the aisles, just as they have wherever the show has been presented throughout the world.

Mamma Mia! will open with a gala performance on May 7, and will run for a total of 10 shows over three weekends. Bookings are available via the Forge Theatre website.



International Playwright and Director Wendy Beckett just goes from strength to strength with her extraordinary talents. Wendy is Patron of Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre Company and a lifelong friend of Rick Edney, a valued committee member of the theatre company. Wendy has the extraordinary ability to succeed with whatever she takes on as witnessed by her international success.

CLAUDEL , written and directed by Wendy Beckett with choreography by Meryl Tankard , premiered in March 2018 at the historic Athénée Theatre in Paris, France followed by a limited season at Festival OFF d'Avignon. Wendy is currently in rehearsal of the play in Sydney which will open as an exclusive Australian premiere, on 23 April at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House.

CLAUDEL is a thrilling combination of narrative, dance, sculpture and music which explores the life of the

highly talented and rebellious young sculptor Camille Claudel. Set in 1880s Paris, this haunting drama unflinchingly questions the notions of genius versus madness and the consequences for those who chose lives that are deemed too different for society to tolerate. CLAUDEL is a thrilling reimagining of the story of one of the world's greatest and most misunderstood sculptors, Camille Claudel and her complex relationship with legendary artist, Auguste Rodin.

As if Wendy's theatre life were not enough, Wendy has entered the hospitality industry and opened her own bar and dining venue in Sydney—*Beckett's*. Assisted by the enthusiasm of her team, and headed by one of Sydney's great chefs, she is providing a venue for people from the arts world to gather and share their craft and ideas. *Beckett's* will attract actors, directors, producers, artists and writers , all who share Wendy's passion for the arts.

Our President and fellow committee members of Bairnsdale Production Line Theatre Company, are absolutely delighted for Wendy and her successes. As a local theatre company we are also extremely grateful to our Patron Wendy for all of her support including the funding of a new theatre company shed to assist our company. We are one of many recipients of Wendy's philanthropic deeds. Wendy and her husband Blake delight in being in the fortunate position to be able to give back to their chosen interests. With good fortune we hope to have Wendy attend our official opening of our new shed in her honour when the project is completed.



BECOMING PRISCILLA!

*Last month I quoted from Jeremy Stanford's book, 'Year of the Queen', his recounting of the creation of 'Priscilla, Queen of the Desert – the Musical'. The book includes an account of his audition for the lead role (successful – obviously!), and it's such a perfect description of every audition, **EVAH**, that I just had to adapt it for the Prattle. I've cut out bits for brevity's sake, but every word below is from Stanford's description.*

"I've wrestled with what to wear. It can't be too casual as I'll feel like I'm stating that this doesn't mean that much to me, but it can't be too dressy either or I'll feel uncomfortably over-groomed. I also want to present an element of how the character would dress. In spite of taking all this into consideration, I know that no one has ever got a role because of their choice of audition attire.

"I can't be late, but I don't want to be too early either. I want to arrive right on time and sale into the audition without having to see or speak to anyone else who's auditioning. Of course I find a parking spot almost directly out the front of the theatre, which makes me frustratingly early.

"I enter the marbled foyer and search for an underling to tick me off the list. They say they're running behind. Great. This gives me just that little bit more time for the nerves to build to fever pitch, and for me to bump into the other auditionees. I don't want anything to destroy my focus or my confidence.

"My turn. I make a last ditch effort to focus, to remind myself that I've done this 100 times and this is what I do. The underling calls my name. There is no backing out now. She opens the heavy, draped doors to the theatre and gestures me inside. One last deep breath and I step into the netherworld of the audition, where everything becomes about the sell. I'm now all about the next 20 minutes. Real Me stops, and Auditioning Me begins. He is not a real person, he is the product which is glinting from the supermarket shelf, tempting you as he says "Buy me, buy me!" The producers are building a corporation. But unlike most businesses, this one is put together like a Meccano set. This one goes with that, and this one needs to do *that* for *this* bit to work. My next 20 minutes needs to be tailored towards being a bit they need.

"I walk out onto the stage. The entire production team, as one, turn their attention to me from behind their laptops. The nerves have created a heightened Me. Everything I'm doing is just that bit over the top. I have my foot on the charm pedal and I'm gunning it.

"With a nod from Simon we begin. In an audition, when your blood is up and you're nervous, it's crucial to keep a tight control of your performance. It's very easy to overcook it. The scene is an emotional one and the temptation would be to turn on the waterworks. I'm determined not to go there, to stop just before I get there – a tricky level to play in this head space.

"The readers (*actors hired to read other parts with the auditionee*) are top-notch and instantly adapt to my interpretation of the character. While we run the scene, I'm acutely conscious of a myriad of things. I keep tabs on the panel, how they're reacting, who I feel is with me or against me. I process the choices the readers are making with the text and whether they're listening to my interpretation of it. It's a juggling act of the mind, because in amongst all this external monitoring, I'm giving a performance which is tight and controlled. I make sure I drive the scene and don't allow the readers to out-shine me. If they don't react to where I place myself, I sweep around them so they have no choice but to respond to me. And then the scene is finished.

"The readers back away, and leave me to sing the song. I launch into it as part of the drama of the scene. I know parts of it sound good and the deep resonance of the beautiful old theatre gives it guts. But then there's the top notes. The first time I go round I slightly choke on them. I've got another chance in the second chorus though, and I go for it. This time I improve on it, but I'm sure they've heard much better over the last few days. I come to the end of the song and finish. Unlike a performance there is no immediate response to rank yourself by. There is no clapping or cheering. Just polite nods from the panel. I scan the faces along the table to hazard a guess, but they're unreadable. The audition is already over and they've shut up shop. I get nothing back from them at all. Having given them the best I could give, I snap out of it and quickly head back the way I came in, this time just that little less self-assured.

"I leave the stage. The panel begins to swarm, and I know they will be discussing me. I stumble unsteadily down the stairs, now exorcising the need to actually be anything but little old me. This last 20 minutes has taken at least two years off my life, and I'm exhausted. As I stagger towards my car, a swirl of post-mortem descends upon me and I squish it away like a pesky ghost. I stop dead in my tracks and shake myself out. I'm going to ignore any negative thoughts which present themselves, but I'm resolved to be happy with having just done my very best in there.

"Doris Day has the best advice for me now: Whatever will be, will be. Time to uncurl from the crushing pressure of trying to stay in this little game."

So there you go – it doesn't matter whether you're an amateur or a pro - auditions are the same for everyone!