

Rain in the Mountains: Songs from Henry Lawson

By Christine Wheeler and Friends

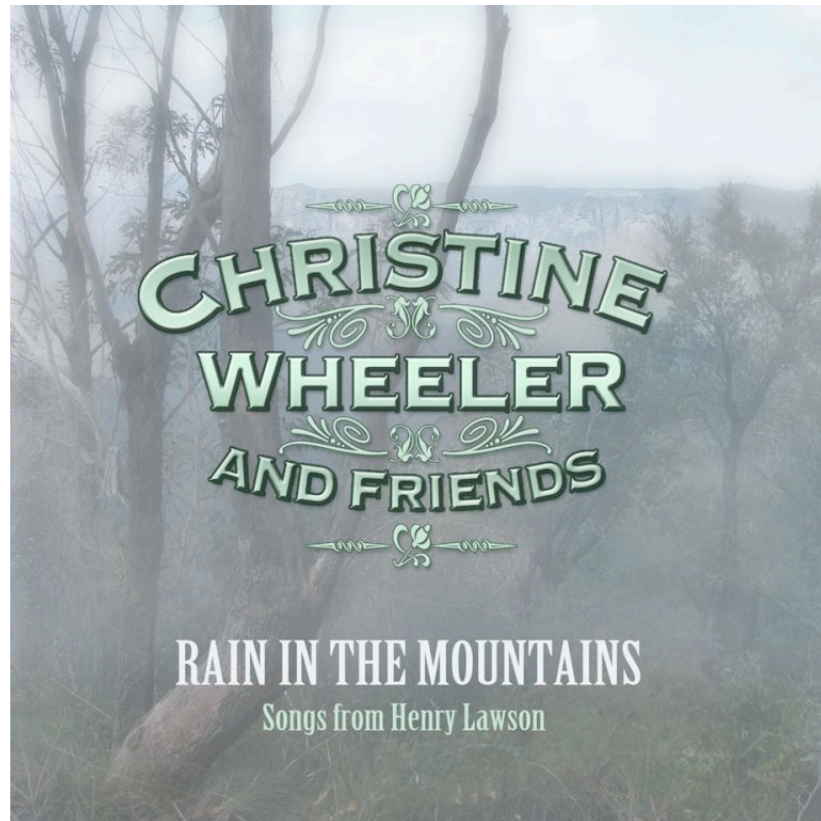


Photo and artwork: Leigh Birkett

'Rain in the Mountains: Songs from Henry Lawson'

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COMPANY PROFILE

Christine Wheeler's involvement with folk music goes back some 30 years, most recently before the current project to her role in managing and fronting the multi-award winning Australian Celtic band Wheelers and Dealers for a decade. Her singing style evokes comparisons to Judy Collins, Sandy Denny and Joan Baez. Christine plays Irish flute, whistle, recorder and guitar. The other musicians in her company are also multi-instrumentalists; they include Leigh Birkett on guitar and bouzouki, and Lindsay Martin on fiddle and mandolin. Leigh's exceptional musical imagination overlays jazz sensibilities onto a Celtic sound. Lindsay is one of the best loved musicians in the folk circuit around Australia, for the warmth and versatility of his performances. The current project 'Rain in the Mountains' celebrates some of the timeless and universal poetry of Henry Lawson. The musical settings are varied in pace and style, and include settings by some famous Australians such as Slim Dusty, as well as original compositions. Another appealing feature of the show is a relaxed commentary on Henry Lawson the man, managed by the 3 band members and illuminating the life of this brilliant but troubled man.

ABOUT THE SHOW

SHOW SYNOPSIS

How does a tortured soul like Lawson, deaf, depressive and a drunkard in later life, conjure up words that will outlast him by 100 years and more? Hard to answer this question without mentioning the word 'genius' – they're all hard to live with! The artists will talk about the complex life of this extraordinary Australian, in between presenting their contemporary folk-inspired settings of this special selection of his poems. From country waltzes and Irish style slip jigs to introspective airs, jazz-tinged ballads and upbeat rocking anthems, these are uniquely beautiful arrangements of settings by writers as diverse as country music star Slim Dusty, John Schumann of Redgum fame, jazz composer Ade Monsbourgh and folk icon Chris Kempster, as well as several originals.

'Rain in the Mountains: Songs from Henry Lawson' has received accolades from punters and presenters alike. For this vibrant and contemporary revisiting of Henry Lawson's resilient poetry Christine Wheeler will be joined by much admired musicians Leigh Birkett and Lindsay Martin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Christine Wheeler – writer, composer, arranger, musical director, producer

Leigh Birkett – art work and design, arranger

Lindsay Martin – performer, collaborator on narrative

BIOGRAPHIES

Christine Wheeler was lead singer and manager of award winning Australian Celtic band Wheelers and Dealers for a decade. She co-wrote the song

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'Woomera' for which Wheelers and Dealers won a Musicoz award in 2003. The second CD from Wheelers and Dealers, entitled 'Full House', won the national Folk CD Award for 2007. Christine is a musician with the Musica Viva in Schools program; she directs a community choir and sings renaissance song in an acapella quartet 'Canon Fodder'. In March 2014 she led a group of singers to Nepal for a unique tour called 'Sing Trek Nepal'. The tour was a great success and will run again in October 2015.

Leigh Birkett is a skilled and flexible accompanist and harmony singer, best known for his ongoing collaboration with Irish-Australian songwriter Martin Doherty. Leigh's exceptional musical imagination overlays jazz sensibilities onto a Celtic sound. His signature arrangements are one of the reasons the cd 'Rain in the Mountains' is receiving such an enthusiastic response. Leigh also works as a sound and recording engineer.

Lindsay Martin – is one of the best loved and most sought after musicians in the folk circuit around Australia, for the warmth and versatility of his performances, and for his hard work and commitment to a project. A long-term collaborator with Melbourne based singer-songwriter Enda Kenny, Lindsay is also a founder member of the Irish style folk group Riogh. Lindsay also works as a sound and recording engineer.

PERFORMANCE SPECIFICS

DURATION

Act 1 – 50 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Act 2 – 40 minutes

SUITABLE VENUES

The show is technically flexible and can be adapted to most performances spaces.

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES PER WEEK

5 performances

MINIMUM BREAK BETWEEN PERFORMANCES

180 minutes

LICENCING AGREEMENTS

APRA/AMCOS licencing on some songs in the show.

APRA OBLIGATIONS

Royalties payable to APRA for 5 songs (out of 17) in the show.

TOURING PERSONNEL

The touring party consists of 4 people.

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Name	Role
Christine Wheeler	Tour manager, band leader
Leigh Birkett	Band member
Lindsay Martin	Band member
arTour crew member	Sound and lights production

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Year	Venue	Number of performances
2012	Musica Viva	2
	CountryWide	
	Arts councils	3
	Performance venues	5
2013	Festivals	5
	Councils	2
	Corporate fundraisers	2
	Performance venues	6
2014	Councils	2
	Performance venues	2
	arTour Qld (projected)	11
2015 (projected)	UK festivals	8

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

1) A workshop on harmony singing. Duration: 90 mins. Music will be provided. Christine directs an adult community choir as well as a children's community choir, and is passionate about encouraging community participation in music making. The aim of the workshop would be to give participants an opportunity to sing in a safe and supportive environment, and to experience the joy of singing in harmony with others. The workshop would offer some new short songs to take away and enjoy long after the workshop is over. It may even help to make connections with other singers from the local area.

2) A workshop on setting poetry to music. Duration: 90 mins. Materials needed: poetry to use as raw material (optional). Community members may be interested in setting their own poetry to music. The band would be more than happy to work with participants with poetry they bring to the session, and also to talk more generally about the principles involved.

3) We are also able to offer workshops in recorder ensemble (renaissance music or world/folk music) and violin/fiddle. 60 or 90 mins duration, participants to bring their own instruments. Please ask for details if there is local interest.

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COST

Incorporated in purchase of show, as community contribution.

TARGET AUDIENCE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Age group negotiable, from children to adults, from beginner to experienced, but would need to be worked out in advance according to demand. We would be entirely dependent on the presenter to promote workshops.

MARKETING

MARKETING COPY

One line: The sound of poetry - Henry Lawson in song

100 words:

How does a tortured soul like Lawson, deaf, depressive and alcoholic, conjure up words that will outlast him by 100 years and more? There's 'genius' in the answer somewhere! 'Rain in the Mountains' presents selected Lawson poems with voices in harmony, folk instruments and an on-stage conversation about the poet's complex life. The show has received accolades from punters and presenters alike. For this vibrant and contemporary revisiting of Henry Lawson's resilient poetry Christine Wheeler (Wheeler and Dealers, Musica Viva in Schools) will be joined by much admired musicians Leigh Birkett and Lindsay Martin.

300 words:

Folk singer and instrumentalist Christine Wheeler was the voice of multi award-winning Australian Celtic band Wheeler and Dealers for a decade. Her singing has at different times been compared to that of Judy Collins, Joan Baez and Sandy Denny.

Now, with the support of 2 other much admired folk musicians, she presents a show chronicling the complex life of Australia's iconic poet, Henry Lawson. Lawson had a gift for conveying powerful feelings in the straightforward language of ordinary people, as the audience will hear during the concert. The program features contemporary folk-inspired musical settings of Henry's poems as varied and beautiful as Lawson's timeless words. Taken from sources as diverse as the great Slim Dusty, John Schumann of Redgum fame, jazz composer Ade Monsborough and folk composer Chris Kempster, and including several originals, these songs have been worked to bring Lawson into the present day with musically diverse and rich arrangements.

The song settings are accompanied by an insightful conversation between the artists, on the ups and downs of this uniquely influential Australian.

The show lasts for 90 minutes and can include an interval if desired. The show was launched in April 2012 and will be available until the end of 2015.

'Rain in the Mountains: Songs from Henry Lawson' has received accolades from punters and presenters alike. Led by Christine's classic folk voice and
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her flute, whistle and recorder playing, 'Rain in the Mountains' features the Celtic and jazz styles of Leigh Birkett on guitar and bouzouki as well as acclaimed fiddle and mandolin playing of Lindsay Martin. A combination of musical teamwork and lush vocal harmonies create a richly satisfying musical experience as well as a taste of Australian cultural history in song.

MARKETING SUMMARY

The special interest areas of our show are folk music, Australian literature and Australian history. However our audience base is surprisingly wide, perhaps because of Lawson's deeply thoughtful lyrics and reflections on life which resonate with the over 50s and retirees in particular. And we're always delighted when younger people find themselves at a show and enjoy it! A profile of the younger age range would include university graduates plus a surprising number of 30-50 year olds whose musical tastes have expanded beyond mainstream commercial offerings.

Our performance is varied in pace and style. The music is both accessible and sophisticated; allowing for virtuosity and generosity at the same time. Our music style finds a ready audience in a broad cross-section of ages, ethnicity and socio-economic groups.

Merchandise - CD of the show, featuring 13 excellent musicians including famous names such as Jim Moginie (Midnight Oil). Also a comprehensive and user friendly songbook entitled 'The Songs of Henry Lawson' - Christine was a co-editor of the songbook, and sells the songbooks at shows on behalf of the NSW Folk Federation. It is a very popular item of merchandise.

Marketing - band member Leigh still works part time in the advertising industry - his expertise in poster and ad production has been invaluable.

Promotion - the biggest drawcard has been the name of Henry Lawson. A surprising number of working people, especially from regional Australia, have a special place in their heart for his work, or a childhood memory of his stories or poems being included in family gatherings. In regions where country music is popular, mention of Slim Dusty's name (see show description) is often a drawcard. Contact with ABC regional radio was invaluable on Christine's previous tour of Queensland - requires someone to make initial contact before start of tour to book interviews, then confirm a day or two out from each.

MEDIA QUOTE

'If no other tribute had ever been made to the achievement of Australia's most enduring poet, this one would do very well indeed. A labour of love and an undoubted contender for folk album of the year, Rain in the Mountains carries contemporary folk music to the sophistication it deserves'.

Paul Cosgrave, editor, 'Blue Mountains Wonderland' magazine and website

AUDIENCE REVIEWS

'The concert was a great success - a sold out event - and a fitting tribute to Mr Lawson, Australia's most loved and revered poet. A must see event,

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suitable for all ages’.

Carol Hellmers, Director, Coffs Harbour Regional Conservatorium, Concert Presenter

‘I listen to Rain in the Mountains every night before I go to bed. It’s so beautiful, and evokes scenes from throughout my long life.’

Ted Merritt, 84, retired Catholic brother living in Darwin

‘Christine and her very versatile group of musicians, provide a subtle and very believable musical backdrop for each song, allowing the words to speak directly to the heart. So much so that when listening to the song ‘The Things We Dare Not Tell’ I shed a tear for its truthfulness’.

Cliona Molins, music educator

‘People in regional Australia will love this performance, and the CD’.

Dr Juliet Hunt, Eugowra NSW

‘I was captivated by your band weaving such a multi-layered project together with your commentary that provided amazing insight into the personal world of Henry and the times in which he lived.’

Jenny Brown, Cultural Development Coordinator, Blue Mountains Council

COLLEAGUE RECOMMENDATION

‘This was a finely crafted presentation, rather more than a concert, with Christine's narration linking the songs, placing them in historical context and linking them to the relevant periods in Lawson's life. The material could work just as easily as purely a concert presentation as these are very clever musical arrangements, taking this material well beyond the usual expectations of this style of music. There are subtleties, skill and impressive musicianship in the way these songs have been put together ... a landmark in the interpretation of Australian folk song’.

Graham McDonald, Recorded Sound Archivist, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

VIDEO LINKS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1TdUoak224>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3YGoGh-XwY>

We are working on broadcast quality footage, at present, unfortunately, there is none available.

IMAGES

Sorry, there are no production images currently available.

MARKETING MATERIALS

We can provide photos, posters, press releases, print ready advertising.

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CONTENT WARNINGS / AUDIENCES TO AVOID

Nothing contentious, beyond a reference to alcohol dependency in the spoken words.

SPONSOR OR OTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

n/a

TEACHER'S RESOURCES

n/a

PRODUCTION DETAILS

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The following responses assume support from arTour in the form of one crew member skilled and equipped in sound and lights.

EXAMPLE SCHEDULE

Bump in and bump out 2 hrs.

CREW REQUIRED FROM VENUE

The show requires only access and local knowledge of the venue.

STAGE

Minimum stage 3m x 4m.

LIGHTING

4 floods, 1 spot (supplied by Rain in the Mountains)

SOUND

Minimum sound 8 channels, good quality vocal and instrument mics, no radio mics. (supplied by Rain in the Mountains)

AV

n/a

WARDROBE

Wardrobe for the show is the artist's own clothes. A dressing room, or makeshift dressing room, would be helpful.

FREIGHT NOTES

The cast will travel in a station wagon; the crew member travelling with the show will have a truck. If there is a loading dock, access for the truck will be required. If at smaller venues where there is no loading dock, the closest possible access point is requested.

CRITICAL ISSUES

There are no critical issues for setting up the show.

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CONTACTS

Christine Wheeler, tour manager, band leader – for all publicity inquiries.

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Leigh Birkett, band member 0425 318 376; leighbirkett@gmail.com

Lindsay Martin, band member 0408 415 517; lindsay@lindsaymartin.com.au