

Originally Produced in 2015 by the Other Guys Theatre Co, Ladysmith BC (www.otherguystheatre.ca)

Adapted from **The Incomplete Folksinger by Pete Seeger**, ed. by Jo Metcalf Schwartz, 1972

Written by Ross Desprez & Mark Hellman

Directed by Ross Desprez Musical Director: Tobin Stokes

Selected Review Excerpts

....it's so real. It became this huge singalong...I've never been to a piece of theatre like that.

- **David Lennam, CBC Radio, Victoria**

...Hellman shines...playing a five-string banjo and a 12-string guitar, and getting the audience to sing along with classics like "Turn! Turn! Turn!", "Guantanamera", and "We Shall Overcome"....I can't remember a play that had me singing along so much.

- **Kathleen Oliver, Georgia Straight**

This is a feel-good show about people living life from the heart, first, the head second, but always striving to keep the two in sync, to never let The Powers That Be have the last say....Which is reason enough to go see this show. To remind ourselves that in today's world of ISIL and mass refugee migrations and an Arctic that may have no ice in a decade or two, the "embrace of hope and love and faith" is ever-worthy, ever-necessary, ever a beacon on the horizon that calls out to our better selves to respond, to act....this show, an old-style hootenanny, will get you humming and singing and clapping and tearing-up at just the right times : you'll thank yourself for taking it in.

- **Baird Blackstone, BrokenLegReviews(Vancouver, BC)**

...Hellman's performance...it was clear just how remarkable a transformation it was.... I loved this show....The play is not just about Pete Seeger, but about politics, folk music preservation, fascinating events in American history, and finding the courage to constantly be fighting for what you think is right.

- **BeyondYVR(blog, Vancouver, BC)**

...beautiful tunes, accomplished story telling, and an immense heart...It takes an assured performer, one familiar with the vagaries of audience participation, to stand, in-effect naked, and take the assembly on a journey through collective memory. Hellman, with his years of performing, and community work—particularly as founder of the Vic High Neighbourhood Choir—definitely has the necessary skills....I can think of a more fitting tribute to [Seeger's] life than this joyful exploration in word and song....

- **Janis La Couvée (blogger, Victoria BC)**

... some seriously heavy lifting... Hellman approached it as a marathon rather than a sprint, imbuing some of the quieter moments with the poise of a pro....The audience often joined Hellman in song, adding support to his banjo and guitar work on folk staples Union Maid, Wabash Cannonball and Kisses Sweeter Than Wine. Hellman communicated Seeger's folksy charm with a raised eyebrow or under-his-breath chuckle, but there was little in the way of acting on this night...

- **Mike Devlin (Victoria Times-Colonist)**

Testimonials

What a wonderful, inspiring evening! Fred and I went to the West End Cultural Centre to see Mark Hellman's one-man show, 'Pete Seeger's The Incomplete Folksinger'. Hellman was great, and we were totally captured within the first 5 minutes; the time flew. It's been a long time since I've sung out at the top of my lungs at a show (and even spontaneously flashed the peace sign!) and to sing once again those labour/union/human rights songs that Seeger dedicated his life to was exactly the tonic we needed right now. The sad part is that the show is based on Seeger's book, written in 1972, yet all those comments, all those songs, have once again become so very relevant today. Sometimes we just need a reminder that we are able to work to change the world if we just stand together.

- **Kate Ferris (Musician & Former Director of communications at Winnipeg Folk Festival)**

I saw this wonderful singalong one man show tonight, Pete Seeger's The Incomplete Folksinger with Mark Hellman playing Pete (and performing his music beautifully). At first I thought, well I'm glad to see an old friend on stage again but I don't really know many Seeger songs. Damn if I didn't sing the whole time, with the rest of the audience harmonizing beautifully. My activist side reanimated, my desire for peace and communication and resistance was whetted, my empathy was tapped and my love for family flowed. 2 shows tomorrow and that's it! Freestanding is small so get there early to get a seat.

- **Alison Darcy (Co-artistic Director, Scapegoat Carnivale, Mtl)**

Saw my friend Mark bring Pete Seeger to life in The Incomplete Folksinger...I am a big fan of Pete Seeger, but I admit I was expecting a "tribute" show. An amazing thing happened. It became an ersatz Hootenanny. As the whole audience sang along (I hadn't planned on joining in, but I couldn't help it) I could feel the power of the history behind those anthems and what they stood for; songs that were the courageous people's weapon of choice against baseball bats, economic oppression, attack dogs, and firehoses; songs that spoke of the need to look at ourselves and take action. More importantly, last night those songs miraculously bridged that span of time to meet up with us today. Society's present struggles, injustices and wrongs became very present in that intimate gathering, and so we sang not out of nostalgia, but in the moment, solemnly at times with a hope that these ills might be conquered, and joyfully with the conviction that they one day would be. You may say I'm a dreamer...Anyway. See this show if you can.

- **Marcel Jeanin** (Montreal actor/director)

The Incomplete Folksinger is an absolute delight from start to finish...This show did justice to who the man was, as well as what made him so wonderful as a live performer. The stories are interesting and intimate. Mark Hellman effortlessly pulls the audience into singing different parts of one song after another, without even seeming to try. This is a loving tribute to a great artist and a man of integrity. I left the theatre feeling inspired and bonded with everyone there.

- **TJ Dawe** (author/performer MARATHON, SLIPKNOT, BURN JOB, MEDICINE) .../2

I was there in the audience on Friday night, and loved every minute of it! And everyone I talked to in the audience (lots of GHC and High Nooners!) were equally delighted and impressed.

- **Shivon Robinsong** (Co-director, Gettin' Higher Choir, High Noon Choir, Victoria, BC)

Recently at a small theatre in Nanaimo my wife Lynne and I along with several members of our family had the pleasure of seeing Mark Hellman doing his one man show about a chapter in the life of Pete Seeger. It was very believable and must have been an incredible amount of work for Mark and those involved with the production. I would highly recommend this show for your future presentations.

- **Gary Fjellgaard** (Juno winning west coast singer/songwriter)

Selected Audience Comments

2020 (last show before pandemic, Fanny Bay)

As part of our concert season, Mark Hellman recently presented his show, The Incomplete Folksinger. at the Fanny Bay Hall. Our audience were spellbound by his presentation as Pete Seeger and delighted to hear so many tunes we recognised, as well as some we didn't. Mark unveiled a piece of American history not well known to many of us, in an entertaining way. He immediately engaged his audience and had everyone singing along (even to tunes we didn't necessarily know well, if at all!). I highly recommend this show as part of a concert series or as a stand-alone performance.

US TOUR 2019

Tonight, in tiny old Bar Mills on the Saco River, you opened a deep well of memory and love. Pete Seeger's long public struggle for justice and peace came to life. I knew none of the other people present, yet when you brought fourth the songs in us, we all relaxed into the comfort of old comrades. You must be feeling the power of the great legacy that is now yours to use. I would like to help if I can....I especially thank you for developing and performing a great program that includes Toshi. Authors, including Pete himself, have said little about her critical role in their exquisite partnership. She purposely kept out of the spotlight, mostly. Yet when she signed her notes "Justa H. Seeger", it was clear that she appreciated a bit of respect now and again. Interviewer: "...and what do you do Mrs. Seeger?" "Oh, I'm just a housewife". She actually managed "Peter" with unending love, and a very clear professional eye.

....Your play... A Herculean task! How do you play Pete in two hours time? I see the play as a vehicle that will educate and encourage others to follow their dreams and live a more active, positive and full life. Of course, you and The Incomplete Folksinger, also invite the audience to sing along. Last Friday, I imagine it may have been a surprise to have some of us singing almost as loud as you! We were an enthusiastic crowd and love Pete and Woody's music. Each song brought forth a well of memories, a flood of feelings plus the chance to sing in harmony once again. I am curious to hear how people less familiar with Pete will respond. Hopefully, the play will inspire each to learn more about Pete and the many causes and people he supported. Let this be a portal to how one person can make a difference.

Mark thank you so much for such a delightful performance last night. I am still smiling and singing. Several times I saw Pete standing there playing his BANJO right along with you. You brought back so many fond memories and I know not just for me but for many of those that were there. You are a blessing and did an INCREDIBLE job sharing Pete's Life Journeys with us. Keep bringing smiles and continue to Journey Well.

I wanted to offer the highest and most sincere accolades to you for an unforgettable and moving performance. Having been involved with the Hudson River Environmental movement for 40 years I've seen Pete perform many times, and during your performance there were many times I thought I was listening to and seeing Pete himself. I can offer no higher compliment. Thank you again for a stellar performance.

...We generally avoid Pete tribute events and have steered clear of one-man shows sometimes advertised...We were happily surprised to sense almost immediately that you had pretty much figured out Pete's essence and delivered a performance that was informed, intelligent, dimensional and expressive. A courageous, enormous and skilled undertaking! Although extremely kind, gentle and modest, he was also fierce, complex, highly intellectual, irrepressible and persevering. We thought you well expressed his range through your chosen words and song choices-- from light hearted ones to the deeply moving "Walking Down Death Row." We sensed you authentically lived into such songs, and you were not only acting.... I have read The Incomplete Folksinger forwards and backwards, and really enjoyed hearing your voice deliver familiar paragraphs as if he were just conversing with us.

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It's only intermission, and I had to post about this show. So beautiful, so powerful, so moving. It's a sing along; and the story of Pete Seeger. I'm so glad I didn't miss this. Mark Hellman, you're a master banjo player. Musicians, please come to this show. Hootenanny time! I'm such a peacenik.

Never before - after the Saturday matinee performance of The Incomplete Folksinger by Pete Seeger, the audience erupted into song, and did their own encore! So incredibly wonderful and moving. A real tribute to the performance of Mark Hellman, and everyone involved in this splendid show!

....transcendent is the correct word for your show. We were all deeply engaged and moved by your performance...one of our members declared that every song had busted his heart open.

- **Earle Peach, Director Solidarity Notes Labour Choir** (Vancouver)

You were the epitome of Seeger and you recreated his times and struggles wonderfully. And we all sang along, some a little more successfully than others! A young theatre student next to me was enthralled. It was all new to her—what a great experience.

...very much a community-spirited audience, in response to the nature of this fine show. There was no fourth wall. Sing, Sing loud. Community and connection. We need this show!

It was the absolute best theatre I have seen all season and I have season tickets to four companies and go to many other shows. FABULOUS !

I just saw one of the best productions I've seen in a long time. I LOVED The Other Guys Theatre Company's production of The Incomplete Folk Singer; the staging was simple, effective; the singing was incredible and the story was even better.

I came home and my heart was so wide open, that I stood on my porch and as I sang those words "if I had a hammer, I felt all that inspiration flood through me. This, if anything...is tremendous service to the world. A show inspired by a man whose life service was about opening human hearts.

Pete Seeger believed in the power of his "banjo to surround hate and force it to surrender." In this show, Mark channels Seeger's indefatigable optimism in the power of songs that make you laugh, cry, and think to change the world. Again In Pete's words: "When ... a crowd joins in on a chorus as though to raise the ceiling a few feet higher, then they also know there is hope for the world." So spend a couple of hours with Mark & Pete -- singing along and recharging your spirit.