



Mark Seymour leads the band of builders-musicians and the Victorian Trades Union Choir in *We Built This City*.

PICTURE:  
GEORGIA METAXAS

# Workers on site, and on song

## THEATRE REVIEW WE BUILT THIS CITY

Melbourne Workers' Theatre, written and directed by Donna Jackson, Scienceworks, Booker Street, Spotswood until May 6. Running time: 90 minutes.

**Helen Thomson** Reviewer

THIS show represents something of a return to its origins for the Melbourne Workers' Theatre, a site-specific performance that powerfully combines aesthetics, work, and a passionate political commitment. It also employs talented individuals who have had great success in theatre and music, and who have impeccable credentials in terms of their works' courageous identification with the underdog.

Donna Jackson, who founded the Melbourne Women's Circus

and directed Vicki Reynolds' play about the Westgate Bridge collapse, *The Bridge*, again demonstrates her ability to extract great effects and power from a performance site. The Spotswood Pumping Station, (now Scienceworks Museum), back-lit by the huge Westgate Bridge, perfectly demonstrates the proud history of construction workers.

Their history, and some of their stories, are told in brief, filmed conversations as the audience in this perambulatory show also watch carpenters and stonemasons at work. The grim facts of life in the building industry emerge from accounts of long hours, dirty conditions, and disaster, none more shocking than the Westgate collapse, described by a survivor.

Then we are treated to a rock

concert, fronted by singer/composer Mark Seymour (of Hunters and Collectors fame), backed by a scratch band of builder-musicians and the Victorian Trades Union Choir. The songs punch out messages of union solidarity necessary for survival in a tough and dangerous industry: *Monday to Friday*; *Fighting to Survive*; *No One's Going Home Tonight* (recalling the MUA battle at the waterfront); *The Bridge Came Down*; *Touch One Touch All*.

Finally, the audience moves outside to watch a balletic performance of three earth-moving machines, one of which is captured by a huge crane and lifted up into the sky. The mixed effect of dangerous power and a touching anthropomorphic little narrative, is fascinating.