

Milk Crate Theatre is a real life look at homelessness

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Milk Crate's Michael Cullen with audiences in Tom Uren Square, Woolloomooloo. Tom Uren looks on from behind.
photo: Heidrun Lohr

Milk Crate Theatre company works with homeless and marginalised people to bring real-life drama to local communities.

Sometimes the shows play to small local gatherings in places such as Tom Uren Square in Woolloomooloo and sometimes they are targeted to a broader audience to help share the stories and life experiences of homeless people with others.

Artistic director Beck Ronkson said participants came from very varied backgrounds.

"Working among the homeless and disadvantaged makes you realise it could be anyone," he said.

"You have people who are highly educated, people suffering mental illness, people who are homeless for economic reasons. There is also a really wide age range from people in their twenties through to seventies."

Milk Crate performs about six shows a year and hopes to restage a major production called Intersections, which involved about 35 homeless performers working with three professional actors and singers from Sydney Street Choir moving around three city locations. The company is a joint project of the Darlinghurst Theatre Company and Wesley Mission's Edward Eagar Lodge, working with people from Hope Street, Mission Australia, Mercy Arms, Matthew Talbot, Wayside Chapel and Rough Edges.

"Some people drop out and turn up two years later. Some people stick around," Beck said of the Milk Crate performers.

The shows usually have an interactive element where audiences can question the actions and choices of the players and all shows are based on the real life stories of the participants.

"It's incredible, their amount of resilience and strength when you see what they get through. There have extraordinary life experiences and amazing survival skills."

The next performance is on April 16 at Edward Eagar Lodge, 348a Bourke Street Surry Hills at 7pm.