



Parlato in Italiano

The Heyday of Italian Cinema in Myrtleford
in the 1960s

Edited by John Taylor and Cynthia Troup

In the early 1960s the Victorian town of Myrtleford could boast of a 'theatre precinct' in Myrtle Street: two venues served as cinemas, both presenting weekly programs that included films of all kinds screened in Italian—*parlato in italiano*. In the same street, the Golden Valley Café perhaps more famously gave the precinct a memorably cosmopolitan atmosphere, especially on movie nights.

Parlato in Italiano is a tribute to the cinema as a meeting place of particular significance in the cultural landscape and memory of a regional area—most vividly during the postwar years before television ownership became the norm. Research, reflections and images evoke the vigour and resourcefulness of Italian immigrants who settled in the Myrtleford area in those years, acknowledging the importance of hearing the Italian language spoken 'on the big screen'. Above all *Parlato in Italiano* points out the many ways in which the shared experience—the romance, no less—of going to the movies helped to foster social integration and an enduring sense of belonging within and far beyond the Italian communities of Myrtleford and the Ovens Valley region.

From the personal perspectives of the movie-goers to the recollections of those in the business of running the cinemas, the stories gathered into this volume are emphatically those of the 'good times' shared with family, friends and co-workers, on weekends or evenings after the seasonal hard work had been done. We read of dressing up to 'go to the pictures'; the frustrations caused by chaperones and out-of-date newsreels; the immersive delights of a Dixie ice-cream and a three hour Hollywood epic.

Myrtleford at that stage was really vibrant, like a small city. You could walk around the town all night and see people. You'd go off to the film and there was always something to do afterwards (Guido Follador).

At the movies in Myrtleford, spoken in Italian, I heard what was to be my third language (Clara Sacco).

It wasn't just Italians who went to the Italian screenings (Nino Mautone).

About the editors

JOHN TAYLOR is a Myrtleford historian and former secondary college assistant principal. As President of the local historical society, he has had a special interest in recording and publishing local family histories, researching the impact of events and developments on the social and economic wellbeing of the district and raising the profile of the society at regional and state levels.

CYNTHIA TROUP is a writer, historian and editor; as an editor she has specialised in Italian Studies, working on monographs and edited collections published in Australia and overseas. Recent projects include *Australians in Italy: Contemporary Lives and Impressions*, edited with Bill Kent and Ros Pesman (Monash University ePress, 2008). She received an inaugural Australian Foundation for Studies in Italy award in 1995.

About the publisher

The MYRTLEFORD & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. was established in 1982 and began developing a collection of records and artefacts in the Old School Museum (formerly State School No. 955) from 1988. The Society's primary roles have been to provide opportunities to research local family histories, collect and interpret documents and artefacts related to the district, undertake educational activities and publish local history. During 2006–2009 the Society published three volumes of *Recollections*, recording the memories of senior members of the Myrtleford community.