

MELBOURNE FRENCH THEATRE

The Melbourne French Theatre was founded in 1977 on the initiative of Michael Bula and David Gorrie. Its object is to present and promote French drama by whatever medium and in whatever form.

The Theatre exists as a totally independent society. It shares a healthy relationship with the Alliance Francaise, L'Association Francophone and other French cultural and interest groups.

The very existence of the French Theatre provides a unique opportunity for the public of Victoria, students of French at all levels, Francophones and Francophiles, including certain ethnic communities and lovers of French drama to witness and enjoy the excitement of high quality French theatrical productions.

The company is always seeking actors and actresses and directors who speak French as native speakers or who are proficient in the language. Can you help?

Theatre telephones - 534 7621 / 347 8598.

LES MONSTRES SACRÉS

The MFT chose to celebrate receiving official patronage of the French Government and also receiving the financial assistance of the Victorian Ministry of the Arts and the Canadian Government by presenting the fascinating "Les Monstres Sacres" by Jean Cocteau entirely in the French language.

The choice of this little known play is explained in several ways - initially it was because the playwright, a man known for his films - therefore of great interest especially amongst French teachers in Victoria. Also the policy of the MFT to present a wide variety of styles of plays and of playwrights (see programme - previous plays) was relevant. Finally, the 'ambiance' and language of the play itself were considered most interesting.

For the short season of performances, this production attracted more than 250 people above all MFT records, since its foundation in 1977.

The Director, Michael Gugola, chose the simplicity of a clear and well orchestrated 'mise-en-scene' - quite cinema-like in style, to most successfully underline the conflicts in the 'menage a trois' - the central theme of the play. He found it most essential to recreate the atmosphere of the 1930s, as far as possible.

This was marvellously done, with the assistance of Alison Scarfe, who as set designer, with Don Savino and Susan Clarke as set constructors, created a tall, white, free-standing set, giving attention to every minute detail and facet of the 1930s. The white contrasted expressly against the blaze of colour that was the furniture and the fabulous costumes of the actors and actresses.

Reine Lavoie played the main role of Esther and previously appeared in "L'Invitation au Chateau" by Jean Anouilh in 1984 for the MFT. A French-Canadian, she has had years of professional experience throughout Western Europe and the USA. This experience and her presence on stage contributed to her success in the part. Karina Lavoipierre played the part of Liane, an ambitious young actress who becomes the mistress of Esther's husband Florent

(Graham Stanley). A native-French speaker - Karina has appeared in three previous productions. She was capable of communicating all the subtleties of the role and was very well received.

Florent, the man among the two women, was remarkably well played by Graham Stanley, a veteran of the opera and theatre, emphasised by his great sensitivity to the part and his co-actors.

Charlotte de Cauville, the busy-body (Helena Steinberg), whose debut in the MFT was in 1983, presented as the eccentric confidante of Esther and is to be congratulated for her spontaneity.

The dear old mother of Charlotte (Mancell Ellery) was similarly well received in her cameo role at the end of the play. Not to forget Barbara Inglis and Michael Bula. Barbara Inglis successfully portrayed the loyal dresser of Esther - Loulou, simple, but with great heart, was a favorite with the audiences. She executed her southern-French accent with flair (Barbara is Australian).

Michael Bula played the radio interviewer (Le Speaker) - a good actor and a veteran of the MFT and one of its founders and presently its Manager. A pity he had such a small part, however his ten or so minutes on stage were some of the most precious.

It was this production, evidenced by the growing number of spectators, especially schools, that was the culmination of years of effort in the endeavour to bring a professional production entirely in French to Victoria.

Next production.

9-12 October 1985

A bilingual play (French/English)

Look after Lulu - Noel Coward

Occupe-Foi d'Amelie-Georges Feydeau

Open Stage

757 Swanston Street, Carlton

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