

L'EMMERDEUR

When: August 24-28

Where: Collingwood College Theatre, corner Cromwell Street and McCutcheon Way, Collingwood

Preview: Simone Short



Janet Besancon and Yoann Vidor

Mon dieu, not him again!

Described as a satirical comedy with hints of blackmail and corruption, *L'Emmerdeur* (*A pain in the *****) by Francis Veber is the Melbourne French Theatre company's 78th production.

Inspired by the 2008 film, *L'Emmerdeur* features the return of the character Francois Pignon from previous Veber works including *The Dinner Game* and *The Closet*. He's a spectacular annoyance to all those around him, and after losing his wife to her psychiatrist, checks into a hotel to end his life. Meanwhile, hitman Ralph Milan has been hired to assassinate the star witness in an important court case and finds himself next door to the incompetent Pignon. An unlikely, and in Milan's case, unwanted friendship evolves between the duo during Pignon's efforts to win back his wife and Milan's attempts to indiscreetly complete his job.

"There is an incredible and fascinating nature to see how Pignon gets under everyone's skin," producer and co-founder of the theatre Michael

Bula explains. "He manages to cause absolute bedlam for the other characters, despite them being professional and balanced people."

Starring an experienced Henry Mera as Pignon and Yoann Vidor as Milan, who Bula describes as a "natural", the cast of six includes both French and Australian performers. "All the actors must be, of course, fluent in French, but we choose whoever is best for the role regardless of nationality," Bula says.

L'Emmerdeur is fortunate to have the provisional direction of Bruce Cochrane who, with more than 30 years of experience, brings depth and creativity to the production.

Melbourne French Theatre company has been staging both modern and classical plays since 1977, catering even for those who do not understand the French language. "We bring plays to them no other theatre can," Bula says. "Since 1999, we have provided subtitles, projected translations on both sides of the stage that are level with the actors' heads. This makes our audiences diverse, similar to those of SBS or French theatre."

With productions as polished as these, Melbourne French Theatre offers a good night out in anyone's language.

For more information and bookings, visit mftinc.org