

# reviews

## CAUGHT IN THE NET (Chat et Souris)

by Ray Cooney

Melbourne French Theatre

Directed by Stig Wemyss

Reviewed By Deborah Fabbro -7 May 2009

My first visit to the Melbourne French Theatre was last year for their production of *Run For Your Wife (Stationnement Alterné)*. I returned this year for the sequel *Caught in the Net (Chat et Souris)*. Written by Ray Cooney it too has been adapted into French by Stewart Vaughan and Jean-Christophe Barc.

17 years on and taxi driver, Jean Martin is still living his double life in the suburbs of Paris. He lives with his wife, Mathilde in Montreuil. He also lives with his wife, Charlotte in Ivry!! However, things have changed a little for him. He is a father now; to a daughter, fifteen-year-old Alix in Montreuil and a son, sixteen-year-old Guillaume in Ivry. This should not be a problem as he is used to keeping a tight and much organised schedule. Yet he had not reckoned on his offspring finding one another through the internet, discovering that they have so much in common, the same family name and a taxi driving father called Jean who is 43! They arrange to meet up and zany antics and mishaps ensue as Jean tries to prevent this. When he enlists the help of his lodger, Gilbert who is about to go on holiday with his elderly father, Papy, things devolve into comic mayhem.

Director, Stig Wymess, allowed this play to go beyond farce to where it became simply slapstick comedy. However, he concocted some very funny and clever business that was well executed by Dominique Gibert who brought a wonderful sense of comic timing and adeptness with business to the major role of Gilbert. I particularly enjoyed his handling of the searching through the bag for the keys and all the business with the snorkel.

I did feel that the director needed to rein in Gweltaz Jacq's performance as Jean as it sometimes became too frenzied. Nonetheless, this was a most credible stage debut.

Frédérique Fouché portrayed Jean's long-suffering wife, Mathilde in Montreuil. While this was a fine performance, there was a tendency to be a little too sharp and shrill. Charlotte was played well by Marine Guillou. She captured the essence of the character. Both of them handled the denouement very well, given the trite writing.

Michael Bula played Papy. This character has some of the best lines in the play and while M. Bula made the most of them, there was a tendency to overplay. His pratfalls were an example of the slapstick nature of this production.

Gemma King and Bastian Rochowski excellently played Alix and Guillaume. Mlle King's Alix epitomised the teenage girl, unhappy with not getting her own way. While M. Rochowski gave an excellent portrayal of a young man bewildered and embarrassed by his father's weird actions.

The set, designed by Sophie Dyring, represents both apartments, and is used by both Martin families, sometimes simultaneously, the only difference being the front doors and the view out of the

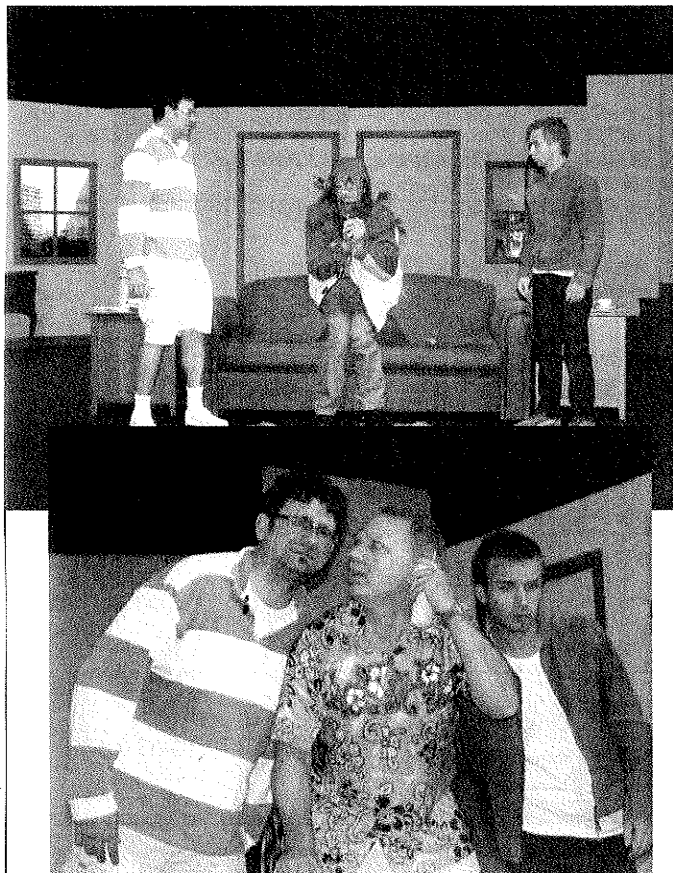
two windows. These views of Paris suburban rooftops were quite effective and enhanced an otherwise plain set.

There were some difficulties with the lighting. Designer or operator error I am not sure but it made for a number of distracting moments through the play.

Sound was well operated with all the sound effects, motorcycle, telephones etc, being on cue.

I congratulate the Surtitles Operator who was very quick with adjusting the dialogue on the screens as the actors occasionally hesitated and rearranged their lines. My companion on the night, who understands no French, felt that the surtitles would have been better placed above the stage rather than on the two screens either side of the stage.

While *Caught in the Net* is not, in my opinion, as good a play as *Run For Your Wife*, it, and this production, still provided a fun night's entertainment.



Scenes from Melbourne French Theatre's production of "Chat et Souris" ("Caught In the Act")