

# LE MÉDECIN VOLANT (THE FLYING DOCTOR) & LA JALOUSIE DU BARBOUILLÉ (THE JEALOUS HUSBAND)

by Molière  
The Melbourne French Theatre  
Directed by Iris Gaillard  
Reviewed by Phyll Freeman – April 7, 2011

I recently spent a fun afternoon at the Melbourne French Theatre's performance of the above bawdy and irreverent plays written by the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century French playwright, Moliere, which were done in the commedia dell'arte style. Great pace and full-on acting from a well-chosen group of thespians.

The stage was set showing the outside of a house, with the front door on the audience right, window (with blind) at centre and an translucent wall left, behind which various characters performed in silhouette. Lighting was strong; music (not listed in program) was excellent and suited both plays. Costumes were in the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century style and well researched. Makeup had some characters with white faces and accented eyes and brows, very much in the

*Continued on Page 9*

*TheatreCraft June 2011 — Page 7*

*Continued from Page 7*

medieval style which relies strongly on facial expressions as well as physical posturing.

On entering the theatre we were greeted by the sight of the cast dressing in their costumes as they congregated on each side of the set. When not performing they were seated on benches against the walls of the theatre. The first play, *Le Médecin Volant*, tells of a young girl about to be given in marriage to a much older man. Her lover enlists the aid of a bogus doctor (his valet, Siganarelle) to declare that the girl is ill and needs the country air. Her father is talked into allowing her to reside in a small cottage on the estate. Then starts an hysterical subterfuge for the valet-cum-doctor-cum twin brother (supposed) maniacally performed by Will Tait. His master, Valere, (Mehdi Khallouk), orchestrated the mayhem that ensued.

The girl's father Gorgibus, ably played by Eddy K. Fatha, was helped by his suspicious valet Gros-Rene (Yves Bessard). The winsome daughter, Lucile (Brune Munier), was well supported by her cousin Sabine (Nihary Ratsimbazafy). Michael Bula as a lawyer just popped in to add to all the confusion.

After interval we were treated to *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* where Will Tait reprised his role as a doctor; erudite this time, in contrast to his role in the previous play. Yves Bessard became the main character, the cuckolded husband trying to catch his very vociferous, errant wife, Angelique (Brune Munier), with her lover, Valere (Mehdi Khallouk). The character of Gorgibus, Angelique's father was again played by Eddy K. Fatha. Her willing servant, Cathau (Sonia Davoine) impressed greatly. Another riotous performance from all.

The only 'blip' to the afternoon was the theatre doors opening after the stated time of starting the performance, causing the young, mainly female, students to surge forward in a mass to get to the 'best seats'. On entering the dimly-lit auditorium I found that there were no handrails to help patrons safely negotiate the steps. A little daunting for the incapacitated. Although there were English surtitles on side screens, I felt the translation lost some of the truthfulness of the original French, but even so, a good time was had by all.

*TheatreCraft June 2011 — Page 9*