

play been in English at such a pace I may have been somewhat critical. However, the mainly French-speaking audience had no such problems as was evident from their continual laughter and obvious enjoyment. Thanks to Bruce Cochrane, Michael Bula, cast and crew for providing a fun-filled night.

PYJAMA POUR SIX

By Marc Camoletti

Melbourne French Theatre

Directed by Bruce Cochrane

Reviewed by Barry O'Neill – May 12, 2012

Pyjama Pour Six is the title of a play written by Marc Camoletti in the late 1980s which ran for two years in Paris. *Don't Dress for Dinner* is the title adopted by Robin Hawdon who did a major re-write, which saw the play run for six years in the West End. It is currently running on Broadway.

Being a farce the plot is convoluted and isn't always easy to follow, but the barest outline is that Bernard has planned a weekend at a renovated country farmhouse with his Parisienne mistress Brigette while his wife Jacqueline visits her mother. As an alibi he has invited his friend Robert to dinner and hired a cook, also Brigette, for the occasion. By chance Jacqueline learns of Robert's visit (he happens to be her lover) and cancels the visit to her mother. Bernard panics and when Robert arrives he tells him his girlfriend

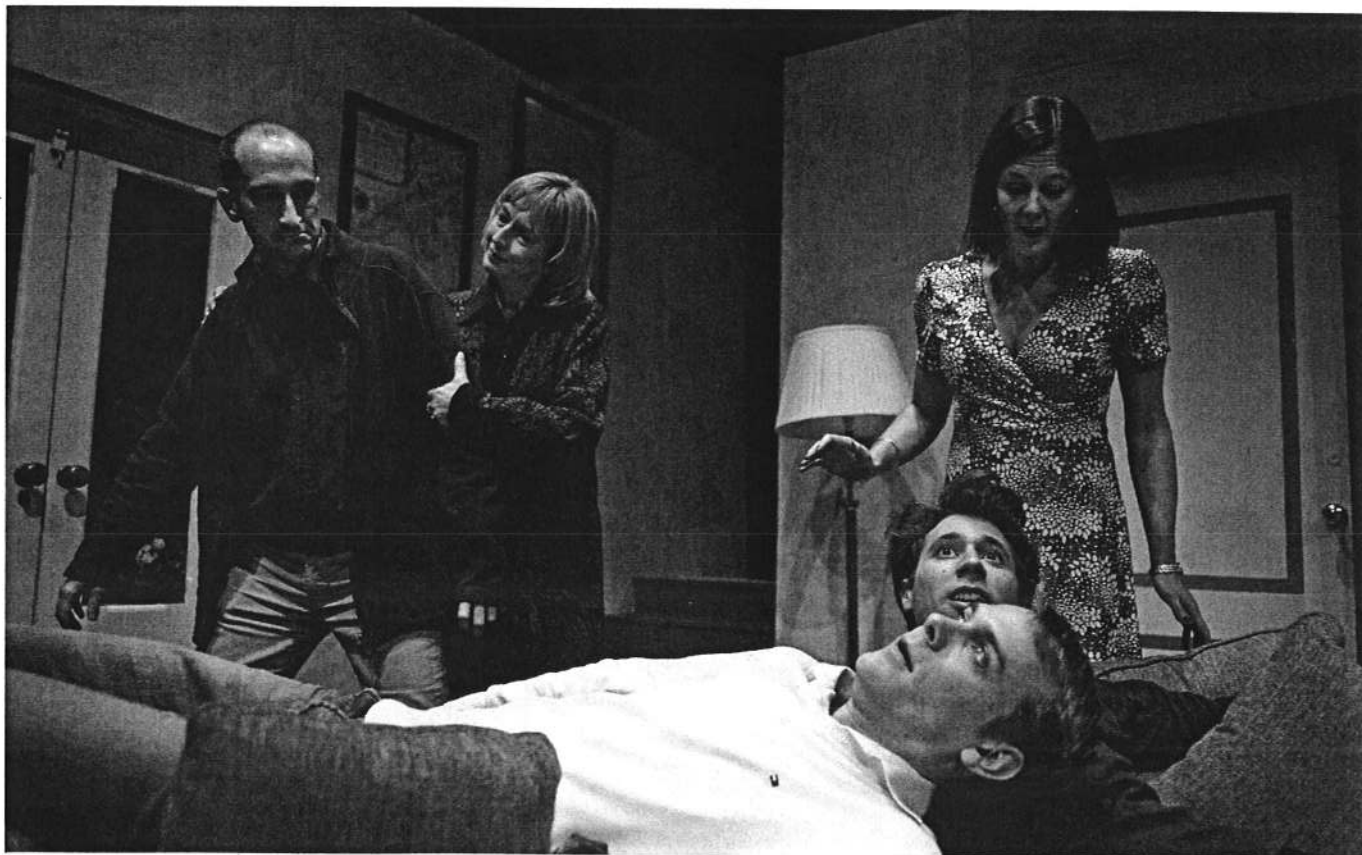
is due at any moment and convinces Robert to say she is his lover. However, the cook arrives first so Robert assumes she is the girlfriend. Then when the real girlfriend arrives she has to pretend to be the cook to keep up the deception for Jacqueline's benefit. Stories are changed, confusion reigns, lovers are at odds, the real cook makes a fortune in bribes and all's well that ends well.

Mehdi Khallouk was an effervescent and animated Bernard, always ready to invent outlandish stories without batting an eyelid and expecting to be believed. His beaming smile continually lit up the stage. As Robert, Geoffrey Denans gave a nicely balanced performance, a quieter character who was always on the wrong end of Robert's ruses and reacted convincingly. Jo Rittey obviously enjoyed every minute of her stage debut as Jacqueline, using facial expression (particularly her eyes) to advantage. In the role of Brigette (the lover), Angélique Montané was bright, moved positively and acted with conviction, but occasionally seemed to lack concentration and dropped out of character. Marc Buret made a late second act entrance as Bertrand, the cook's husband, and carried the role nicely albeit with limited opportunity. The remaining cast member was for me the 'show stealer': Catherine Jackson-Grose was utterly convincing as the cook Brigette. Significant experience as an actor and dancer showed in the ease with which Catherine moved around the stage and in the credibility of her characterisation.

Given the limitations of the venue a very workable set was designed by Anne-Claire Deville, giving us a simple living room with bedrooms upstage left and main entrance downstage right. The set was nicely furnished and props suited the setting. A fairly straightforward lighting plot was effectively designed and operated by Greg Abendroth.

An extra special mention must go to the translators and operators of the surtitle facility: Anna Pitt, Dominique Wong Kai Pun, and Sylvie Eggertswyler. Apparently over 600 slides were developed to cover the script — a great achievement expertly executed.

The dialogue was delivered at a frenetic pace. If I thought my schoolboy French might have helped me understand, I was sadly mistaken. (Thank goodness for the surtitles.) Had the



(l-r): Marc Buret, Catherine Jackson-Grose, Geoff Denans, Mehdi Khallouk and Jo Rittey in Melbourne French Theatre's *Pyjama Pour Six*. Photo by Richard Markowski.