



A scene from Melbourne French Theatre's "Stationnement Alterné"

RUN FOR YOUR WIFE

by Ray Cooney

Melbourne French Theatre

Directed by Stig Wemyss

Reviewed By Deborah Fabbro – 7 May 2008

Ray Cooney must have been French in a past life. I have seen *Run for your Wife* previously but this version, translated and adapted by Stewart Vaughan and Jean-Christophe Barc to "*Stationnement Alterné*", epitomizes the wonderful tradition of French Farce. Mr Cooney would be proud.

Jean Martin is a taxi driver in Paris. He lives happily with his wife, Mathilde in Montreuil. He also lives happily with his wife Charlotte in Ivry!! He manages his double life quite well, with a tightly organised schedule, until one night he stops to help an old lady who is being mugged and ends up in hospital with a bump on the head. Having given the hospital one address and the police the other, he finds himself under investigation from two police inspectors. Both his wives have become suspicious and the upstairs neighbour from one apartment, Gilbert, who he took into his confidence, is only complicating matters. All this sets the scene for an evening of riotous fun. And that is exactly what Melbourne French Theatre gave its audience.

The set, which was mirrored to present the two apartments, just painted different colours, was appropriately furnished and I was pleased to note the attention to set dressing in the 'kitchen' and 'bathroom/bedroom' areas offstage when characters exited through the doors.

Technically everything was in keeping, costumes, lighting and particularly sound with the timing of phone calls spot on in this fast paced show.

A production of this play will only work if all the cast are working together. Director, Stig Wemyss assembled a cast that did exactly that and really understood the sense of farce, had a faultless acuity for timing and delivery and were always exactly where they should have been.

Richard Stracchi, as the hapless Jean, showed just the right amount of bewilderment and concern, as his life devolves around him, without ever going too far in his characterization.

As the upstairs neighbour in Montreuil, Gilbert, Erwann de Carheil was superb. He captured all the nuances of the role and played them to the hilt. His facial expressions and body language were used to great effect.

Both Frédérique Fouché (Mathilde) and Bruneilde Munier (Charlotte) as the two loving wives were excellent. Both portrayed their devotion to Jean and their frustration toward his most inconsistent behaviour with verve and style.

We meet the suspicious and methodical Inspecteur Treguiet first, from Montreuil. Michael Bula played him as a believable policeman and let the lines find the humour. A most enjoyable performance.

Eddy K. Fatha gave a lovely comic portrayal of Inspecteur Pontarlier who has a more kindly approach but still wants to get to the bottom of just what is going on. Again, a very enjoyable performance.

Clifford Edouard was in the role of the neighbour in Ivry. He brought a wonderful outrageousness to the role and was a

delight to watch each time he appeared in coveralls that became more and more paint-spattered as the leaking paint became more and more of a problem.

My companion for the evening, who is not fluent in French, found the body language, expressions and interpretation of the actors sufficient so that only an occasional glance at the surtitles was required.

C'était une grande production. Merci beaucoup!