

La Comtesse Bis



By Moliere. Melbourne French Theatre. 4 to 6 May 2017

No need to lament the passing of another French Film Festival for the year, MFT is here to give us our dose of genuine French culture. A production that will delight Francophones and Francophiles, Melbourne French Theatre (MFT) proudly celebrates 40 years of bringing French theatre to Melbourne in its 101st production.

Moliere, the great French comedic playwright and actor, seems a fitting choice for this significant anniversary. The show is short and sharp (about 90 minutes including interval), with plenty of physical comedy to entertain those of us who can't quite keep up with the language. The story has a Romeo and Juliet-type romantic element, with the characters Julie and Le Vicomte forced to hide their love due to a family feud.

Smart direction from Rosa Campagnaro includes elements of Commedia dell'Arte, for which she is well known. The costumes and set are beautifully styled with that effortless attractiveness only the French can seem to achieve. The small cast of eight each gave strong performances. I particularly enjoyed Lila Girod's cheeky portrayal of Andrée, maid to La Comtèsse, played with suitable conceitedness by Jennifer Brigant.



English surtitles are projected onto screens on either side of the stage, although it's a little hard to read from afar and impossible to read and watch the performance at once. I wonder if the screens with the surtitles could have been moved into the same line of sight as the performance space?

Credited as a key conduit of French culture in Victoria, the passionate heart MFT shines through. Its co-founder and this show's producer, Michel Bula, also performs as Monsieur Bobinet. His daughter Heidi stars as Julie. Here's to the next forty years of MFT enriching Melbourne's diverse performing arts scene.

Sophia Dickinson