

## L'EMMERDEUR or A Pain in the @\*#!

by Francis Veber

Melbourne French Theatre Inc.

Directed by Bruce Cochrane

Reviewed by Richard Burman – August 27, 2010

Melbourne French Theatre delighted their audiences with one of the funniest, slickest productions of farcical comedy seen for some time in their presentation of *L'Emmerdeur* by Francis Veber. The play was in French with English surtitles. Bruce Cochrane selected an excellent cast for this play, all of whom suited their characters well, and obviously drilled them to perfection. The play started on a high note and did not drop pace for a moment. It steadily grew and grew in tempo and frenetic movement.

The set was plain but spacious, representing two adjoining rooms in a hotel each of which had two or three doors and a large window overlooking the town square and which were linked by a connecting door. There was the usual plain hotel furniture – a double bed, bedside table with lamp, occasional table, a heavy blind on the window which kept falling down and knocking people out and a large area for the frantic action.

Henry Mera was excellent as Pignon, the pain in the @\*#!. We have all known people like Pignon, who do not know when to keep quiet, when to go away, when not to interrupt, who cannot do anything properly and whose neck you would like to screw. His aggravating relationships with the other characters were convincingly portrayed.

He was equally matched by Yoann Vidor as Ralph Milan, the occupant of the other room. Milan is a hitman and has rented the room to commit an assassination from his window during a celebration in the square. The frustration of Milan at the continual interruptions to his plans by Pignon was well conveyed and Yoann's ability to make his body and actions almost like elastic after he had been injected with a tranquiliser was a joy to behold. The reactions between these two performers were very funny and skilfully portrayed.

The speed and briskness with which Victoire Mazounie as Virginie, a bellgirl, moved helped get the play off to its brisk start and her continual popping in and out the two rooms from doors on completely the opposite sides of the stage helped maintain its pace. Her differing reactions to various scenes which confronted

her on these entrances were well conveyed.

Janet Besancon was Louise, Pignon's estranged wife, and gave a slightly underplayed performance which was in good contrast to the chaos reigning around her. Her new lover, Dr. Wolf, was played by Romain Hermelin, who conveyed well his inability to completely comprehend all that was happening around him.

Damien Kenny completed the cast as Le Flic, the cop, whose job it is to prevent any attempted assassination. Damien too had the ability to make his body relax as if it were elastic and the slow motion athletic struggle between him and Yoann Vidor was comic acting at its best and greatly appreciated by the audience.

Francis Veber has written a very funny play and Bruce Cochrane and his cast brought it almost perfectly to life for the audiences of Melbourne French Theatre Inc. All in all a very happy evening at the theatre.



(l-r) Henry Mera, Janet Besancon, Romain Hermelin, and Yoann Vidor in Melbourne French Theatre's *L'Emmerdeur*. Photo by Richard Markowski.