



Melbourne French Theatre
Théâtre Français de Melbourne

INTRODUCTION - 2010 MELBOURNE FRENCH THEATRE INC.

33 Year History

Melbourne French Theatre (MFT) was founded in 1977 by Michael Bula and David Gorrie. In 1985 MFT was constituted as a non-profit incorporated association and was placed under the patronage of the French Consul General in Melbourne. In 1986 MFT was honoured to receive the patronage of His Excellency the Ambassador of France to Australia as a measure of the official recognition and prestige the Company has attained over the years. In 1991 MFT was entered on the Register of Cultural Organisations administered by the Department of the Arts in Canberra, thus providing tax deductibility for all private donations.

French Government grants

MFT was for 20 years, but is no longer the recipient of grants from the French Foreign Affairs Ministry through the French Embassy in Canberra. The Company is sponsored or supported by a number of large French companies established in Victoria as well as through business and private donations.

Victorian Multicultural Commission

MFT is proud to acknowledge the invaluable financial and moral support from the VMC for more than 10 years, without which MFT could not function to its present levels.

Productions

Two to four productions are mounted each year being mainly theatrical plays either entirely in the French language or in bilingual (French/English) form. On some occasions *cafés-théâtres* and other projects are presented. The Theatre draws its inspiration for plays from a large repertoire of French playwrights from the Middle Ages until the present day.

Professional support

MFT employs professional directors, artists, set designers, technicians and other staff who may change from production to production to enhance the great variety of styles and presentation of theatrical works. The Company has performed in conventional and experimental theatre spaces as well as in National Trust mansions.

Australian and International Tours

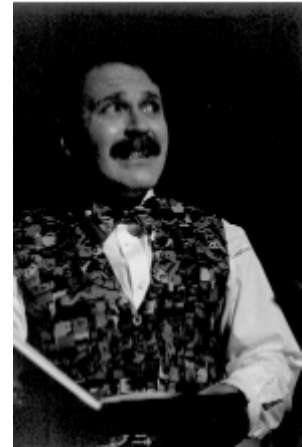
MFT has toured three (3) times to New Caledonia - in 1988 with *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard* by Marivaux, in 1989 with *Pauvre Bitos* by Jean Anouilh and in 1991 with *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* by Molière. The last tour to the South Pacific was of the bilingual adaptation of *Hôtel Paradiso* by Georges Feydeau/John Mortimer created by Jean Papillon to Vanuatu in August 1993.

The company toured a number of times with great acclaim to in Australia on occasion by special invitation of the French Ambassador to Australia with the Marivaux classic *Les Fausses Confidences* in February 1993, *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh in May 1994, being *Huis clos* by Sartre in May 1995 and *Dormez, je le veux* by Feydeau in late 1998 to the St Arnaud French Festival and March 1999 for the Canberra International Multicultural Festival. The production of *Le Père Noël est une Ordure* toured to the inaugural Adelaide French Festival in November 2000.

In 2007 the special MFT adaptation of *Le Petit Prince* directed and adapted by Karen Berger toured to more than 45 primary and secondary schools throughout Victoria, preceded by a preview season in June and a full production in December attracting nearly 7,000 spectators in all.

Management

The Theatre is managed by Michael Bula assisted by a Council of professionals from the fields of law, accounting, the arts, university administration and teaching in order to provide the wide base that is required to administer the specialised enterprise of presenting live French theatre in Australia and overseas.



Michael Bula, Executive Director of MFT, as Algernon in "L'Importance d'être Constant" by Oscar Wilde 1996.



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Producer

Michael Bula is MFT Producer and main finance and infrastructure provider through his legal office Michael Bula Solicitors, International Lawyers and Notaries. He owns the trade mark name.

Productions

The Theatre has presented some 75 productions during its 33 year existence. Amongst its actors are to be found professionals and amateurs alike of French, Australian, European and other nationalities and origins. For a full list – see our website at www.mftinc.org.

Official Patronage

The French Embassy and the French Consulate General actively support the activities of MFT and all its endeavours. MFT also shares a healthy relationship with other French interest and cultural groups such as the *Alliance Française de Melbourne* and the French-Australian Association.

University of Melbourne

In May 1995, MFT concluded an historic association agreement with the Department of French and Italian Studies at the University of Melbourne, where the Company was founded. The agreement provides for, amongst other things, exchanges, cooperation for the promotion of mutual interests, student and staff participation in MFT activities, a staff member appointed *ex officio* to the MFT Council, as well as the Theatre officially forming part of the prestigious University community.

2009

In May 2009, MFT presented *Caught in the Net* [*Chat et Souris*] by Ray Cooney, adapted to French by Stewart Vaughan and Jean-Christophe Barc, directed by Stig Wemyss. In August, *Elle l'attend* [*She is waiting for you*] a new 2008 play by Florian Zeller was directed by Matthew O'Sullivan.

Audiences

Audiences are made up of French speaking ethnic groups, French speaking Australians as well as school and university students. The very existence of MFT serves to fill a cultural need in the presentation of the most exciting vehicle and exponent of French culture - live theatre.

Other Services

MFT is also an agency which provides French "looking" and speaking actors and extras for films, TV, commercials and photographic work.

General

The Theatre provides an opportunity for the public, students at all levels, francophones and francophiles including certain French-speaking ethnic communities and lovers of French drama to witness, participate in and enjoy the excitement of quality French theatrical productions.

