

## **Essendon Theatre Company**

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or

Online [www.essendontheatrecompany.com](http://www.essendontheatrecompany.com)

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### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

We've come to the final production for 2016 "Witness for the Prosecution" and what a year it's been. There have been 5 huge identical dresses, huge movable flats and animal poo and for this play, we get to use the home made book wallpaper. Such variety can only be found at Essendon Theatre Company.

But on a serious note, congratulations to our directors, Natasha Boyd, Travis Handcock, Michael Bond and Michele Haywood and their incredibly talented casts and crews who have graced our stages at etc in 2016.

A huge thank you to our Committee who, as usual, put in loads of work behind the scenes: Christine, Ros, Michele, Michael Bond, Steph M, Steph K, Cienwen and even Ben. And to all the people who have helped with set building especially Colin and Michael Bentley.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to our sponsors Bookbonding, Megagraphics and Office National and the support of our audience members who make it all worthwhile.

I wish all of our members a very Merry Christmas and hope to see you at "Witness for the Prosecution" and look forward to sharing another year of theatre with you in 2017

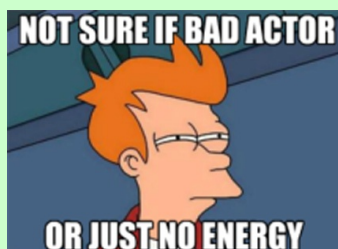
Cheers,  
Dawn

### **UPCOMING AUDITIONS**

**MADAGASCAR**

Tuesday, 6th December

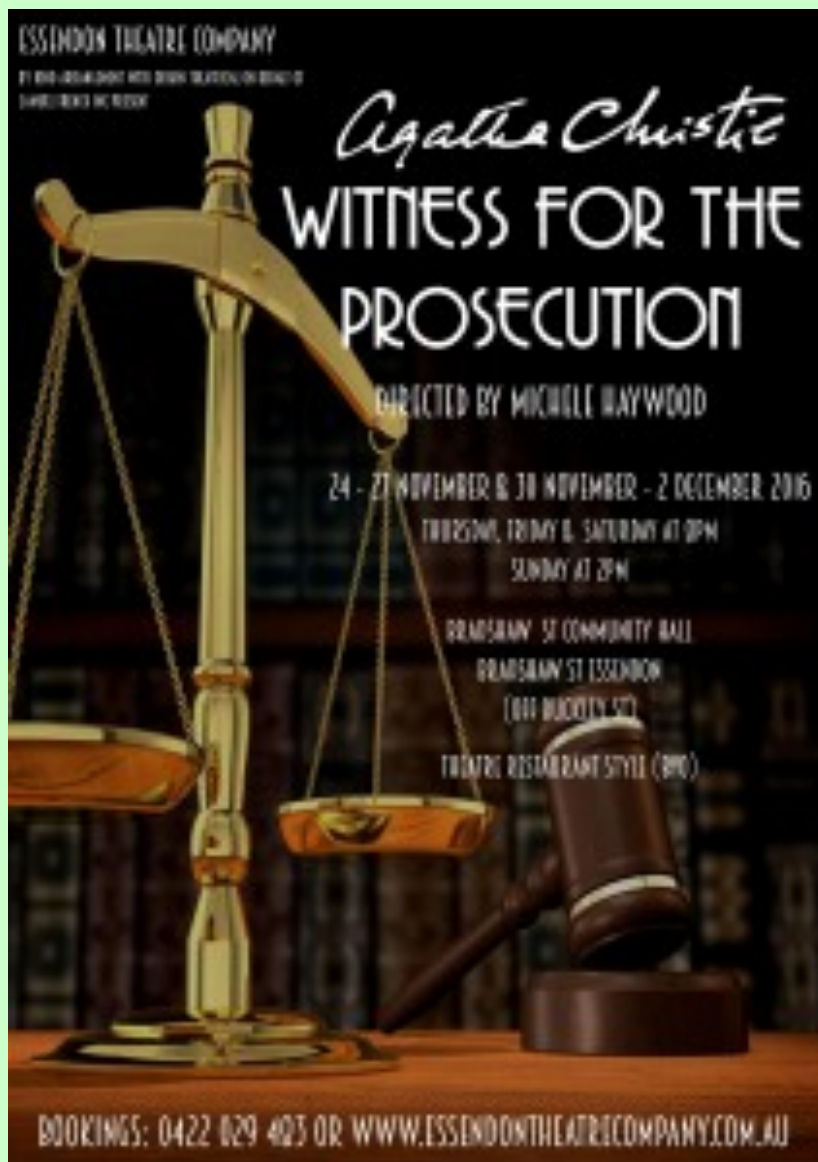
Thursday, 8th December



# *Witness For The Prosecution*

**By Agatha Christie**

**OUR NEXT PRODUCTION OPENS THIS  
THURSDAY. GO TO  
ESSENDONTHEATRECOMPANY.COM.AU TO  
PURCHASE TICKETS.**



# **The Weekend Review**

**Published in Theatrecraft by the Victorian Drama League**

by Michael Palin

Essendon Theatre Company

Directed by Michael Bond

Reviewed by Richard Burman –  
September 17, 2016

Michael Palin's play *The Weekend* is a comedy, but a bitter-sweet one: it moves between Ayckbourn-type comedy and Monty Python-type touches and senses of humour. The play centres around Stephen Febble, a grumpy irascible man, whose wife has arranged, much to his annoyance, for their daughter, son-in-law and grand-daughter to come for the weekend. The party is enlarged by her inviting the neighbours for dinner, who bring with them their chiropodist. Stephen Febble is a large role as the character is on stage the whole time, or leaving for the next room on a few occasions and then only for a matter of seconds. Tony Adams was cast in this difficult part.

Stephen Febble growls, grumps and resorts more and more to the bottle to get him through the weekend and family visit.

And then in the last quarter of the play he has to change focus and let us see underneath his protective, bristly outer shell the reasons for his disappointment with the way his life has turned out over the years. Under the careful direction of Michael Bond Tony extracted much of the humour of the character without losing the sympathy of the audience with his continuous growling, which could easily have been done. Michele Haywood, playing his long-suffering wife Virginia, created the perfect foil for Tony's character to push against. This was an excellent performance which brought out all the facets of the character trying to cope with, and keep the peace of, a weekend party which was going horribly awry. These two characters are the glue which keeps the whole play together.

The remaining characters, with their idiosyncrasies, are really there for Stephen Febble to bounce off and growl at. The visiting family—daughter Diana (Tania Maxwell), son-in-law Alan (Ross Tempest) and grand-daughter Charlotte (Bianca Farinaccia), together with their

incontinent dog (which we do not see but whose problems add to the tension of the weekend)—fleshed out the characters given to them by the playwright skilfully. This too is a dysfunctional family, but the character we learn most about is Alan. Ross Temple worked hard to make him three dimensional in his scenes with Tony Adams.

The neighbours who came to dinner, Duff and Bridget Gardner, were played by David Dodd and Elaine McDuff, and here too were two nice performances. David gave a steady performance as Duff, Stephen's friend who enjoys a drink and a chat but who suffers Stephen's tongue when he does not always agree with Stephen's opinions and views. The Gardners brought with them Hugh Bedales, Bridget's suave chiropodist.

The suspicions of Stephen have been aroused that Bridget might be having an affair with Hugh, who was played by Kenji Shimada. The characters portrayed by Elaine and Kenji were in delightful contrast to all the other members of the dinner party.

The cast was completed by Lynne Elphinstone-Gray as Mrs. Finlay, the daily, a cameo role.

Director Michael Bond worked hard to bring this play to life by assembling a sound, competent cast and blocking them carefully. He made full use of the broad Essendon stage and, with Michele Haywood, designed a set which gave the actors plenty of room to move around and create visual pictures of relationships between characters. The problem of the several scenes, coming maybe from Michael Palin's experience in television and motion pictures, was efficiently organised by Rosalin Shafik-Eld, the stage manager. The costumes supervised by Christine Nilsson suited the characters and the lighting design carefully covered the whole of the acting area. As usual the very warm welcome by the front of house staff, which is a trademark of the Essendon Theatre Company, was extended on arrival and at the interval.

# 2017 ETC PLAYBILL

**Madagascar**

**By JT Rogers**

Directed by Stephanie Gonelli

Production Dates: March 30 - April 8

Auditions: December 6 & 8

**A Pantomime**

Directed by Michele Haywood

Production Dates: July 1 - 8

Auditions: TBA

**BABY WITH THE BATHWATER**

**By Christopher Durang**

Directed by Drew Mason

Production Dates: September 14 - 23

Auditions: TBA

**UNNECESSARY FARCE**

**By Paul Slade Smith**

Directed by George Benca

Production Dates: November 23 - December 2

Auditions: TBA



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