

## Essendon Theatre Company

9 - 11 Bradshaw Street, Essendon

For bookings SMS 0422 029 483

or

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

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am loving our diversity this year. We started with a drama in *The Freedom of the City* and followed with a stylized comedy in *Private Lives* and now we are about to begin a pantomime, then finish the year with a situation comedy, *Boeing Boeing*. I think we have something for everyone.

*Private Lives* was a very successful production. Congratulations to Joshua Wolter and his amazing cast: Zoran Babic, Kirsten Page, Brendan Allan, Leanne Savage and last (but certainly not least) Rosalin Shafik-Eid on a wonderful production. The audience members were very complimentary about the play and we gained 2 new groups of people who will hopefully, be back for future plays. Well done everyone.

Our next production *Aladdin* has been cast and is into production under the very capable direction of Michele Haywood. The rehearsals have been a combination of workshops, craft sessions and rounding up kids. I'm sure that the production will be a huge success. Chookas to all involved.

On behalf of the Committee I'd like to wish a speedy recovery to Michael Bond who was going to work the lights for the panto but had a bout of ill health. We hope you are back on your feet in no time Michael.

Cheers,

Dawn

### UPCOMING AUDITIONS

#### BOEING BOEING

Tuesday, 15th September

Sunday, 20th September

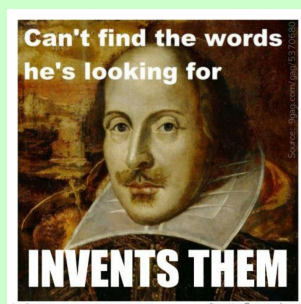
#### FIVE WOMEN WEARING THE SAME DRESS

Sunday, 29th November

Tuesday, 1st December

#### 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Saturday, 15th October



**Aladdin**  
**By Michael Bentley**  
**Directed by Michele Haywood**

This year's pantomime, Aladdin, written by the great Michael Bentley, is enormous. 22 cast members and at least 22 people (some of them the same) helping out behind the scenes. We have been really fortunate in being able to make use of the stage design from *Private Lives* and some of the props made by the Men's shed. Recycling is a wonderful thing.

The cast comprises some old hands at Pantomimes: Xavier, Mai, Eva, Sabine, Miles, Travis, Marina and Kyle along with new and enthusiastic children - Dominique, Charlotte, Mitchell, James, Aiden, Michael and adults Bianca, Steph, Alex, Mazz, Kirsten, Peter, Clare and Keith. It is wonderful to see the cast coming up with ideas to enhance the production and the dedication they put in at rehearsals.

Kirsten Page who last starred in *Private Lives* plays Aladdin. In this production of Aladdin, assistants shadow many of the key players. The Narrator, Sherezade, played by Steph Morrell, has three assistants to move the story and the sets along, Travis Handcock the Genie of the Ring has a much cleverer assistant in Xavier Brown.

Danielle Biksha has done the set design and has made some awesome props.

Not to give too much away, watch for Widow Twankey's rendition of "Oh lord won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz", a skateboarding Genie, Gangnam style and the ever popular chicken dance.

We want as much audience participation as possible and hope that everyone who comes has a great time.

Bookings can be made at [essendontheatrecompany.com](http://essendontheatrecompany.com)

Michele



# Private Lives Review

Published in Theatrecraft by the Victorian Drama League

## PRIVATE LIVES

By Noël Coward

Essendon Theatre Company

Directed by Joshua Wolter

Reviewed by Alan Dilnot - July 2, 2015

Essendon Theatre Company rose above the limitations of the stage at Bradshaw Street Community Hall: though not wide enough to contain a Steinway grand piano as called for in Acts II and III of *Private Lives*, it was made to look spacious enough to contain two sets of French windows in the balcony scene of Act I, and a broad and comfortable sitting room for the rest of the play. Décor and furnishings were nicely in the well-to-do French style of the 1930s, and the costumes were very attractive and exactly right for the period.

A word about the set-up for the audience: seating was cabaret style, with separate tables as in a club, audience members being invited to bring their own refreshments. The atmosphere was friendly and intimate. It was a very cold night, but curtaining kept out the draughts usually encountered in a community hall, and shawls from the costume cupboard were

available to help some of us keep snug and warm.

*Private Lives* is unmistakable Coward, flirting with naughtiness and the risqué, the dialogue larded with epigrams, sarcasms and wit, mainly voiced by the leading couple, Elyot and Amanda. The play is recognisably of the '30s period too, in the characters' inability to rely on traditional morals and religious beliefs; Amanda and Elyot explicitly disclaim faith in an after-life, though they are very well able to experience heaven and hell in this life. They have no other signposts but what they have learned from bitter experience. On the one hand Amanda and Elyot can appear flippant and superficial as they hop from one powerful assertion to its opposite; and on the other they can sound like pioneer existentialists as they forge their own values by the choices that they make. Through Amanda and Elyot, Coward was speaking for and to the artistic and intellectual elite of his generation. This of course places a heavy burden on Amanda and Elyot: they are each highly individual and yet they have to be representative

of their time. The attitudes of that time are in several respects different from our own, no more so than in the presentation of what we now call domestic violence. Elyot says at one stage, after hitting Amanda, that "Certain women should be struck regularly, like gongs", and there is no clear indication that the playwright disagrees with him.

The central couple have to face an additional pressure, for Coward himself confessed that he had imposed great demands on them by giving them the main task of driving the play along, from original twist in the opening scene when coincidence brings them together on adjacent hotel balconies, to the final curtain when they depart as a couple, looking back on their legal but apparently as yet unconsummated spouses who are fiercely squabbling. A monumental challenge for the actors playing Amanda and Elyot is, as Coward says, the second act, where before "the rough-and-tumble at the curtain... there is exactly forty minutes of dialogue... which naturally demands from [the actors] the maximum of

resource and comedy experience" and where "there was no help from the author". Coward was perhaps entitled to be self-deprecating because in the first production he played Elyot, opposite Gertrude Lawrence as Amanda.

It must be said that Zoran Babic (Elyot Chase) and Leanne Savage (Amanda Prynne) came out of this dramatic ordeal with credit. Act II moved at a natural pace, full of interest and never dragging. There is a wide range of emotions and attitudes on show in this scene and both Zoran and Leanne moved easily from one to another, being more in love with each other than ever at one moment and hating each other the next.

The music that in the original production was meant to be sung was transferred in this production to the gramophone, but this was managed quite deftly and credibly.

Rosalin Shafik-Eid deserves praise for her spirited presentation of Louise, the French maid. She was in action

only briefly but during those moments she dominated the stage, in what sounded like impeccable French.

Zoran gave a highly competent performance: clear, measured and covering a full range of tones. Likewise Leanne, with the added skill of unmistakable dancing ability. My only demur in her case was the accent she adopted: it was clear enough, but not really convincing as upper-class English.

Coward eventually came to criticise his own work in this play. He spoke of his "dastardly and conscienceless behaviour towards Sybil and Victor, the secondary characters. These, poor things, are little better than ninepins, lightly wooden, and only there at all to be repeatedly knocked down and stood up again." I think he was being unfair to himself in this regard, but in any case Kirsten Page, as Sybil, and Brendan Allan, as Victor, succeeded in developing substantial characters for themselves despite the alleged meanness of the playwright. Kirsten was by turns self-pitying, self-doubting, ingratiating, angry and tigerish. Just occasionally

the accent she used made her words unclear, but her stage presence was good, and she contrasted well with Amanda. Brendan too was a good foil to Elyot, and was always convincing where firmness and even menace were required; he didn't, however, suggest that he had a vulnerable side that could be hurt. Kirsten and Brendan played their final "fight" scene with convincing energy and animation.

We saw the petty selfishness and self-absorption of the main characters, and the fragility of all their protestations, whether of love or of hate. Yet they are victims too, of themselves and of their partners. As in most of the best comedies, together with the laughter there is the sadness that comes with the thought that in the future these characters will only ever repeat themselves. Joshua Wolter's production did full justice to the deeper gloom that lurks beneath the comedy.



# 2015 ETC PLAYBILL

## **THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY**

**By Brian Friel**

Directed by Travis Handcock

Production Dates: April 9 - 18

## **PRIVATE LIVES**

**By Noel Coward**

Directed by Joshua Wolter

Production Dates: June 25 - 28 & July 2 - 4

Audition Bookings Contact

Joshua 0415 896 700 or jbwolter@gmail.com

## **A PANTOMIME**

Directed by Michele Haywood

Auditions: \*\*CLOSED\*\*

Production Dates: September 18 - 27

Audition Bookings Contact

Michele Haywood 0413 692 283

## **BOEING BOEING**

**By Marc Camoletti**

Directed by Terese Maurici Ryan

Auditions: Tuesday 15th September 7:30PM & Sunday 20th September 2:00PM

Production Dates: November 26- 29 & December 3 - 5

Audition bookings Contact

Tess 0449 932 921 or terese\_m@hotmail.com

# *PROPOSED 2016 PLAYBILL*

## **FIVE WOMEN WEARING THE SAME DRESS**

**By Alan Ball**

Directed by Natasha Boyd

**Read-Through:** Monday 16th November 2015 7:00PM -  
Held at Book Bonding  
409 Keilor Road, Niddrie

**Auditions:** Sunday 29th November 6:00PM & Tuesday 1st  
December 7:30PM

**Production Dates:** April 7 - 16

Audition Bookings Contact  
Natasha [info@bookbonding.com.au](mailto:info@bookbonding.com.au)

## **SEMINAR**

**By Theresa Rebeck**

Directed by Travis Handcock

**Auditions:** Sunday 9th April 6:00PM & Tuesday 12th April  
7:30PM

**Callbacks:** Sunday 17th April 12:00PM

**Production Dates:** June 23 - July 2

Audition Bookings Contact  
Travis Handcock 0424 494 829 or [handycsu@hotmail.com](mailto:handycsu@hotmail.com)

**THE WEEKEND**  
**By Michael Palin**

Directed by Michael Bond

**Auditions:** Tuesday 28th June 7:30PM & Sunday 26th June 6:00PM

**Production Dates:** September 8 - 17

Audition Bookings Contact  
Michael Bond 0400 887 900 or 11kinsale@gmail.com

**40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**15th OCTOBER 2016**

That's right! ETC is turning 40 and we'd love you to come and celebrate with us.

**Venue: TBA**

**DRESS:** Come as your favourite character that you have EITHER PLAYED at ETC or SEEN at ETC over the past 40 years

**SAVE THE DATE - OCTOBER 15, 2016**

**WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION**  
**By Agatha Christie**

Directed by Michele Haywood

**Auditions:** Sunday 11th September 6:00PM & Tuesday 13th September 7:30PM & Sunday 18th September 2:00PM

**Production Dates:** November 24 - December 3

Audition Booking Contact  
Michele Haywood 0413 692 283 or michwood@bigpond.com





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