



LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES

Where: Collingwood College Theatre, Collingwood
When: August 26-30
Preview: Jane Barraclough

Flirtation is best in French style

The battle of the sexes is a classic drama, understood in all languages. But the power play between the feminine and masculine is all the more fiery in French.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses is an 18th-century tale of two vengeful ex-lovers who try to destroy each other through a game of sex, wit and revenge.

Once described as “a play-by-play seduction manual”, the text has been widely studied and dramatised. But Australian audiences haven’t had the chance hear the infamous story of treachery and passion in its original tongue – until now.

Set in the decadent world of the aristocracy in pre-revolutionary France, Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’ classic novel was a creative feast for Elwood resident and director Christiane Hille.

Hille worked with Melbourne French Theatre to produce the first French-language adaptation of the book for stage. The new adaptation was written by Colin Duckworth, a professor of French at Melbourne University.

“The play stays true to the novel,

retaining many original quotes,” Hille says. “He has done a good job of bringing as much action to the stage as possible.”

“Nothing is ever as it seems.”

Hille says the sensual play draws out the subtle and subconscious motivations of its characters as it brings to life conspiratorial letters between the key players – the notorious womaniser Valmont and the predatory Marquise de Merteuil, – who vie for control over each other and their victims.

“To me, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is a pleasure ride to ruination, and ultimately all pleasure is destroyed by a profane desire to defeat the opposite sex at any cost, even beyond death,” she says. “I am fascinated by the obsessive power play, seduction and revenge that drive this passionate theatrical experience.”

Les Liaisons Dangereuses is Hille’s first play in French, and she says the language accentuates the drama and passion of a universal story. And for audience members who don’t speak French, the English surtitles should fill in the gaps.