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Boat People is a confident first outing from emerging playwright, **Emma Park**, with a mini courtroom drama, packed with dramatic testimony.

In the High Court, before a sedate Mr Justice Barebones, (**Bryan Hands**), the animated Captain Papangelos (played expertly by **Giorgio Galassi**) is called as a witness, in defence of his employers.

The captain is pitted against a hard-nosed and high-flying Miss Featherstone (**Louise Morell**), who paints the captain unfavourably and besmirches his good character, finally submitting the good captain put the safety of his ship in danger to rescue immigrants floundering at sea.

This extended playlet tells the story of a man's honour and sense of duty in a rapidly-changing world, which no longer values these sentiments. Curiously, the dialogue tells the audience more from what it leaves out than what it reveals – the Q&A session with the playwright afterward revealed the audience were left with some unanswered questions; including the outcome of the court case.

Roger Sansom's dialogue is confined to opening the court's business and calling the witness; nevertheless, Sansom's facial expressions reveal all you need to know about his thoughts on the testimony.

Overall, the production isn't bad. It's 40 minutes well-spent, but just as the story gets going and the audiences interest is peaked – blackout! The audience was left wanting answers, a result, a verdict, a conclusion. The story has a start, a middle, but in this case, no end. The story has so much it could give and the faux wood panelling and black gowns effect could have been achieved better by stripping this production back down.

When the major criticism is the brevity though – you must be getting something right.

Reviewed by Lee Knight

