

Review, *Pijin/Pigeon*, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru/Theatr Iolo, Pontio
by Gareth Williams

I couldn't help but be impressed as a dysgwr Cymraeg by the Theatr Gen/Iolo co-production of the adapted play *Pijin / Pigeon*. For here is a play on words; an exploration of language in which CAPTIONS are used to their greatest *effect*. They do not feature simply to make it a bilingual production. Dwyieithrwydd is a natural part. It represents the intermingling, conflicting, and lived experiencing of Welsh/English in a WALES of the '90s that somehow carries into today. Their *type-setting* – yes, *type-setting* - and **font** also play a crucial role in **expressing** the **expressive exuberance** of the main character. Owen Alun succeeds in bringing a cheeky playfulness to *Pijin*, who does not so much escape his homelife as channel it through the medium of straeon. These are told with **boundless** enthusiasm to best friend *Iola* (Elin Gruffydd), the two of them getting ^{lost} in a world of pure imagination until, 'un diwrnod', the concept-ual crosses into the act-ual. Three key scenes then ^{pl!} their lives in different < directions > and the various thematic tensions are explored. *Pijin / Iola* become themselves a *tensiwn*, no more so than through iaith, but also as *cof / fact* wrestle with each other and childhood / adulthood get caught in a neverland of not-quite growing-up. **BIG** themes are tackled in such a ^{short} space of time, and with ^{limited} set design **hard-hitting** moments are created. Alun and Gruffydd are well supported by the extremely versatile Carwyn Jones + extraordinarily vigorous Lisa Jên Brown. Nia Gandhi (*Cher*) is a sweet delight, the unsung cherry on ^{top} of a play that utilises **projection** in a fresh, almost innovative way. It takes nothing ~~away~~ from the *physicality* of the action or the *symbolism* of the *mise-en-scene*, both of which contribute to the overall emotion and dramaticism of the narrative. It would not be as rich – as effecting – as original – without the visible *illustration* of l e t t e r s, which s-t-r-i-n-g together from the mOuths of their reciters to *form* meaningful soundS which are given shΔpe onscreen. It is these **words** – Cymraeg a/neu Saesneg – which are celebrated at the heart of Bethan Marlow's interpretation of Alys Conran's novel, casting a subversive shadow over the dark reality of its characters' domestic lives.