

## Sanity with the intensity of madness

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FROM the synopsis one might have been forgiven for expecting *Cwmni Cyfri Tri Joli Boy* to be a cross between Brecht and Weill's *Der Jasager* and Walt Whitman's *There was a Child Went Forth*.

In the event, the production, seen at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, on Wednesday evening had nothing of Whitman's innocent and open-eyed wonder but, on the other hand, it paralleled to quite an extent Brecht's child truth teller.

In developing this tale of the boy who wished to fly beyond the confines of his containing societal and geographical locus *Joli Boy*, a Welsh play created by the Four Person Company, contained aspects which were also reminiscent of the physical movement and choragic elements found in Compass Theatre Productions and also in the adult-child world of *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*.

However, out of their depiction of the tension between conservation and change; between religious fervour and the ecstasy of the flesh; between innocence and the desire for experience, Mari

Rhian Owen, Dylan Davies, Eryl Ellis, and Jeremy Turner created a work in which sanity has the intensity and fascination of madness.

Although the production was perhaps overfilled with histrionics and hysteria there was an abundance of challenge and complexity.

So that, for example, just as in his book, Robert Pirsig's son, Chris, was both son and then simultaneously the author in youth, so here in the play, the boy was surely also the returned stranger in youth, and the wanton country wench, the religiously-zealous mother in her more profligate younger days.

Despite its episodic rather than developmental construction, *Joli Boy*, which tours Wales until March 20, is a funny, thought-provoking and a vigorous vignette for those who feel trapped, contained by Wales and Welsh culture.