

# INTERVIEW

# Gwenfair's method in madness of Moths

**Alun Prichard hears from a rising star of the stage scene of the unique taste of life in the Big Apple**

**R**HYS Ifans stares down on New Yorkers from the massive billboard in Times Square and Ioan Gruffudd threatens commuters with his sword on the subway while Richard Nyland smiles at the yellow cabs in Greenwich village. These three Welsh actors' faces are to be seen everywhere in New York as Ifans promotes his latest film, Danny Deckchair, Gruffudd King Arthur and Nyland the comedy series Coupling - but they are not the only ones.

An actress from Gerlan near Bethesda is adding a feminine touch to the Cambrian takeover of America's first city's advertising hoardings for Cinnamon Moths, the bright new play she produces and stars in.

Gwenfair Vaughan Jones had made a name for herself on our screens, on the airwaves and in our theatres before deciding to head west.

"I came to New York in January last year," she says. "I was interested in the Lee Strasberg courses in method acting and wanted to learn more about it."

She got accepted into the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute where she followed in the footsteps of Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Dustin Hoffman.

"The Strasberg method is far more internal, more reliant on your own experiences. And having learnt it means it's like having a new tool in your tool box, but because you've got a new tool it doesn't mean you won't use some of your old tools.

"I found that I loved it and the city, and decided to get my American working papers. My New York stage debut was the title role in Miss Julie at the Marilyn Monroe Theatre, and after that an international cabaret in a part about Wales called Land Of My Fathers.

"The part was all about presenting a snippet of Welsh culture to an American audience, because they know b\*\*\*\*r all about it, so as a Welsh person here I feel I have to do the PR."

From these early performances Gwenfair was invited to join theatre company Britpack as an associate producer to put together a play for a month-long run off Broadway.



Actress and producer Gwenfair Vaughan Jones is delighted to help spread the word about Welsh culture in New York

"I had never done any producing before but have always had an interest," she says. "So I've been on a steep learning curve since I joined as the way they work here is totally different to home as well. There are no bodies like the Arts Council, it's all down to you, but I really enjoy it.

"I will also be playing one of the characters in the first production, a specially commissioned play called Cinnamon Moths."

Cinnamon Moths is by two of the newest, hottest

properties in British playwrighting and is sure to test American audiences.

Set in a society where tyranny and violence are commonplace, it explores how fear and oppression affect relationships and how dissidents overcome adversity, finding that it is the power of love which finally helps them conquer fear and hatred.

Gwenfair says: "The piece deals with how people cope with oppression which is why it is so timely in America as so many here feel under threat

and in a state of fear. It is full of lasers and projections and the set is very industrial, plus the audience know from the start the characters will die. There is a clock which is part of the set that counts down to their death."

Gwenfair is swiftly making a name for herself Stateside and often finds herself in parties chatting to the likes of Tim Robbins and Sean Penn, but she will not commit herself to New York or America.

"You have to go where the work is, so nothing can be set

in concrete," she explains.

Speaking in Welsh it is hard to imagine she has even left her Gerlan home but she admits that her months in the Big Apple have left their mark on her English.

"I don't quite say 'kwaaffee' for coffee yet, but I have picked up the accent a little," she says, but there is no denying the old cliché, you can take the girl out of Wales but you can't take Wales out of the girl.

● Details about the production can be found on website [www.mothsplay.com](http://www.mothsplay.com)