

## **Pidgin Macbeth ★★★**

Piccadilly Theatre, London

Can this be serious? Well, as serious as you would expect from Ken Campbell, theatre's most anarchic cultural terrorist, whose ammunition is almost always of the custard pie variety. He has not entirely given up his other theatrical activities, but he is currently devoting himself to the Wol Wontok world language movement.

Wol Wontok is based on the lingua franca of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Republic of Vanatu. It is variously called Tok Pifin, Pidgin or Bislama. Hence Pidgin Macbeth or Mached Blong Wilum Sekstia, as it is rendered here.

In the enjoyably dotty pre-interval talk, Campbell insists that anyone can learn Wol Wontok in just two days. In fact, a lot of Pidgin Macbeth is entirely incomprehen-

sible, although a familiarity with Shakespeare's original and the actors' enthusiastic mugging will probably see you through.

There are some advantages to this language. The play, transposed to Vanatu, is shorter, most of the soliloquys become quite snappy and the language itself is vibrantly expressive. So King Duncan is now Bigfala Jif Tunkun and Lady Macbeth's "Come you spirits attend on mortal thoughts, and unsex me here" becomes the delightfully succinct "Seton, takem mi handbag."

Even so, quite a lot of the evening passes without a great deal of point and the laughs are pretty hit and miss. While there are some brilliant touches, the wealth of good humour doesn't always make up for the loss of subtlety and poetry.

**Lyn Gardner**

Till October 30. Box-office: 0171-369 1734.

## Gardner Guardian Pidgin



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