

Faust reasserts its relevance

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEW

ANCIENT THOUGH the tale may be, the themes of the Faust legend remain today as relevant as ever.

We all of us sell our souls in one way or another. Some dedicate their lives to work, some to collecting record albums or comics and some, even, to reviewing.

Each of these activities demands a price and at the end, death comes to fetch us all though we hope always for salvation through the love of a woman (or woman of a man).

The Wales Actors Company is currently presenting Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* at the Sherman Theatre and at the very beginning the sound of the good doctor busy at his typewriter and telephone amongst his Penguin books announces that this has, in Ruth Martin's production, been brought firmly up to date.

David Robertson portrays Faustus as an angry middle aged lecturer attended by duffle-coated students. Paul Garnault, a poor typist who is transformed into a black-leather-clad rent-boy, completes the overall impression of this production as a Malcolm Bradbury fantasy.

There is an appropriate set and lighting by Paul Colley and also effective individual moments, like the visitation of the vices. But what this fast-paced production lacks is the sharply delineated and believable characterisation necessary for involving the audience in caring about the lives and fates of the characters. The consequence of this lack is to diminish the stature of the play and the relevance of its themes. On the other hand that pace ensures that there is never a dull moment.