

OPERA: Ryland Davies is impressing audiences in the US

Welsh tenor makes his mark in the Santa Fe's new season

WELSH tenor Ryland Davies plays a significant role in contributing to a flawless and powerful production of Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* during the 43rd season of the Santa Fe Opera in New Mexico.

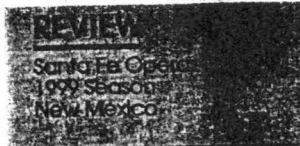
Singing the role of the chaplain, Davies joins Patricia Racette's engaging and simply sung Blanche, Lynette Tapia's delightfully happy yet ultimately tragic Constance and

IFOR PAYNE

Sheila Nadler's forceful and deeply moving *Madame de Croissey*.

The conductor is 29-year-old Stéphane Deneuve, making a memorable major opera house debut. He is surely a name to watch.

The whole performance is staged simply and to great effect by director Francisco Zambezi.



Scenic designer Allison Chatty has provided a single revolving grey wall, one side of which represents the secular and the other the religious world, and which serves

to cut down the stage space so that the singers perform to, and with, each other.

By any measure, this is one of the most gripping and moving of operas in which the unforgettable staging grows naturally out of George Bernanos's thought provoking libretto and Poulenc's elegant and dramatic score.

The newly installed electronic libretto system, in which the simulta-

neous translation of the words is displayed on the backs of each seat in the auditorium, ensures the full power of the opera is conveyed to each member of the audience with a minimum of distraction.

Elsewhere during the five-opera repertoire, Ryland Davies displays his acting talents with a delightfully observed performance of Tschekko in Emmerich Kálmán's *Countess Mariza* and Catrin Wyn-Davies

sings engagingly, and to great effect, in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, a performance that is stylishly conducted by Kenneth Montgomery.

The two other operas in this season's repertoire are Bizet's *Carmen* and Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in which the star is surely the conductor John Crosby, who is now in his last season as general director of the ever stimulating Santa Fe Opera which he created in 1956.