

Happy End, at the Sherman Theatre

Ambivalence about the End

By IFAN PAYNE

HAPPY END presented by the St Donat's Music Theatre opened at the Sherman Theatre on Thursday evening.

This is a lively and entertaining production of a significant work and it typifies the importance of the Sherman to the artistic and entertainment life of Cardiff.

Happy End is presented as a "hilarious and fast-moving comedy" which is good entertainment but a far cry from the difficult and provocative work which caused a riot and the intervention of the police at its premiere in Berlin in 1929.

This play with music was the fourth collaboration between Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht and followed close on the heels of *The Threepenny Opera*.

But whereas the earlier work has persevered and triumphed to this day *Happy End* is now mostly known only for its celebrated songs, Bilbao and Surabaya Johnny.

One of the joys of this production is to be able to hear the songs in context as part of an organic

REVIEW

theatre work.

I am ambivalent about this production. On the one hand it was thoroughly enjoyable and contained many imaginative details in the staging, such as the parting of money from hand to hand until it ended up where it started.

The over-all performances were strong centring on Richard Stuart and Rosamund Shelley and there were individually notable performers.

Richard Morris's exuberant *Mandalay Song* is a show stopper. He looked like some wonderful outtake from *Some Like It Hot* and he brought the genuine whiff of Berlin cabaret to the production.

Similarly, Diana Judd made the most of her all too brief opportunity with a skilful presentation of *The Ballad of Hell's Lilly*.

On the other hand, Mike Ashman's generally broad-gestured staging tended to blur the distinction between the piety of the Salvation Army and the unprinciples gangsters