

Woyzeck at St Donat's Arts Centre

# Exposing the beast in man

By IFAN PAYNE

## REVIEW

**JUST** as Wedekind's animal tamer sets the scene for his human zoo, so in Georg Buchner's play *Woyzeck*, it is the fair-ground showman who displays the irrational rationality of the beast in man.

This central character was tellingly portrayed by Gwenith Owen during the Theatre West production of *Woyzeck* at St Donat's Art Centre on Friday evening, and in doing so she provided the only comic relief in a play which concerns the madness of the human condition.

Georg Buchner's own life was as irrational as the world he created in this drama. He was born in 1813, but died at the tragically young age of 24, having completed three plays, *Danton's Life*, *Leonce and Lena*, *Woy-*

*zeck*, and one short novel, *Lenz*.

To add to his tragic situation he is now best known not for being the brilliant and prophetic playwright that he was, but because of Alban Berg's opera based on *Woyzeck*.

Although the play was written 150 years ago the work is arrestingly contemporary in feeling and Laurence Sach's economical production emphasised the episodic use of the short, snapshot scenes which foreshadowed cinematic editing in its build-up of the characters and the tensions between them.

Last night upon a small wooden platform in St Donat's, the three actors and two actresses of Theatre West captured exactly the demented world of poor *Woyzeck*