

**From Buchner to Berg,  
at the Reardon Smith**

**Merging the  
work of  
geniuses**

By IFAN PAYNE

LAST MONTH Theatre West staged its stimulating production of Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck* at St Donat's Arts Centre and in two weeks time Welsh National Opera will premier its new production of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in Cardiff.

Last night Triangle Theatre presented an economic but powerful *From Buchner To Berg* which explored the relationship between the play and the opera.

Joseph Kerman in his Opera As Drama was right to call Buchner's play *Woyzeck*, which was barely completed when the playwright died at the age of 24 in 1837, "one of the most extraordinary in theatrical history."

Kerman was also correct about its "cinematographic scenes."

Buchner predated by almost a century the expressionist German films in which were found the full flowering of his dramatic vision.

If Buchner was a genius of the theatre, Berg was not far behind in setting a foundation for the music theatre movement of the present day.

On one level *From Buchner To Berg* was a workshop which explored the link between the two works. On another level the production was a theatrical experience in its own right.

Given that the production chose to concentrate on the verbal text, rather than on the musical one, a major omission was the failure to recognise the crucial importance of the character of the doctor as representing the irrationality of the supposedly rational mind and the lunacy that lies behind the mask of science and technology.

Nevertheless in *From Buchner to Berg*, Triangle Theatre have created a particularly stimulating and throughoutly engrossing theatrical experience which presented in, Berg's own words, "the vast social implications of the work which by far transcend the personal destiny of *Wozzeck*."

As both Triangle Theatre and Theatre West's productions have shown, it is possible to hear, but not to understand Berg's *Wozzeck* without having seen the work of the extraordinary dramatic genius on whose shoulders he stood.