

Poor Girl at Sherman

Arena Theatre

A new and provocative production

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEWS

THE *Poor Girl* is a new play by Michael Bosworth, currently playing at the Sherman Arena Theatre.

A production of the Made in Wales Stage Company, the play is the result of rehearsal, re-making, and recreations by the writer, actors and the director Gilly Adams.

And that result is alternatively entertaining, polemical, often witty, sometimes moving; always holding attention.

The play covers the period of the Merthyr uprising of 1831 and the construction is such that we never see the historic actions themselves but rather catch glimpses of those who, as it were, wait in the wings reacting to snapshots of Bosworth's "collective fantasy of history."

As the central character, the poor girl who moves from little rags to riches, Ann Gwyer in her first major role, portrays the right mixture of strength and vulnerability of one who is caught, uncomprehending, by the swirling tides of fortune.

Stephen Ley is both gripping and moving as Husto, who sets the play in motion and remains its voice of conscience.

In time, the other critical figure, that of the doctor will surely come more into focus as, torn by town on one hand and mansion on the other, he moves through his own spiritual development which results in a form of crucifixion.

Sharon Morgan, striking in a variety of parts, dealing a series of witty lines with deft timing and Peter Richards, Vivienne Moore, Graham Sangster, Laurence Allan and Timothy Lyn - with evocations of Tim Hulse's Mozart - all contribute strongly.

Brilliantly staged, *Poor Girl* is a disturbing provocative play for those with minds like a billiard table with pockets in each corner.

Poor Girl will be playing at the Sherman Theatre until February 21, after which it transfers to Theatr Clwyd.