



Helen Field at Vale of

Glamorgan Festival

## Words that fail to have meaning

WHAT worries me about Helen Field, as it did in a 1985 St David's Hall performance, is that a whole song can go by in a mouth-ing of vowels, where one finds it impossible to guess at the language being used let alone discern individual words.

The sound is indeed lovely, but it is no more than a (quite well paid) vocal exercise.

After a while the strain becomes too great and I simply give up trying to understand what she is singing about.

This diction problem gave rise to a unique experience during her recital at St Donats in this year's Vale of Glamorgan Festival when she attempted a song from *Facade*.

This is a work which depends for its effect upon pointed enunciation but which here became, as it were, a contradiction in terms since not a word could be made out.

Add to this the absence of body movement and the fact that she has one facial expression: An all purpose smile.

Even a line like "But I whom life has treated cruelly, will wash my mark of anguish with sorrowful of tears" is bestowed with The Smile.

By IFAN PAYNE

What this adds up to is that Helen Field is at best half a singer.

That half was heard at its best in the group of Strauss songs to which her voice is well suited and the beautifully-produced tone and sunny vocalism almost made me forget that every word came out sounding like every other.

Michael Pollock, the accompanist, was also perhaps at his best here though throughout he found the mood appropriate to each song.

Murray Johnston, the singer's husband, was the sprightly oboist in an interminable sonata by Sammartini.

He made more of his chances in Poulenc's charming and more emotionally complex *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*.

The next concert in the Vale Festival will be tomorrow when the Lute Group performs at Fonnon Castle.

Other programmes to look forward to feature the St Donat's Music Theatre on August 21 and 22 and the infectious *Loose Tubes* at the Paget Rooms, Penarth, on Friday August 28.