

# THE NORTH

## THE CRITICS

# Stage truths

**Maria Marten or The Murder in the Red Barn, at Newcastle People's Theatre.**

THIS is the famous Victorian melodrama none of us has ever seen.

Based on William Corder's actual Sussex murder of his former lover (he'd previously murdered their baby) the play itself is a lurid sensational piece of theatre written by an anonymous barnstormer to tour fairs and showgrounds some 20 years after the scandalous trial itself.

It milks its audience in the style of today's gutter press, paying few homages to accuracy.

So why stage it? Director Chris Goulding provides an intelligent and impressive answer.

In the first half he gives us the play itself, in the second, based on his own researches in the area, a courtroom drama of the trials.

In the first half Roger Liddle is the sneering rotter Corder, Margery Bone the wide-eyed innocent Maria and Steve Robertson the good natured country bumpkin.

Significantly, most humour is milked from the scene where the father digs up the body in the barn.

Contrast this with the cold, harrowing details of the discovery as related in the trial proper. Nowhere is the contrast more sharp.

Peter Mortimer

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have been agreed. Sports enthusiasts in- determined to cater for the needs of the majority of people in Derwentside.

# Melodrama murder magic

*Maria Marten and, Murder in the Red Barn,*

Peoples Theatre, By Brid Fitzpatrick.

complimented by Steve Robertson as her rather stupid fiance Tim.

The performers throw themselves into the mood of the thing and overact with gusto and the overall effect despite the sombre subject matter, is very amusing.

THE Murder in the Red Barn is a superbly melodramatic piece written more than 100 years ago.

The second half of the play is more serious, based on research undertaken by director, Christopher Goulding, into the events surrounding the real William Corder and the murder. It provides a fascinating 19th Century courtroom drama.

Roger Liddle plays William Corder, the villain and a thoroughly nasty piece of work. His performance is perfectly suited to the mood of the play and draws a hiss from the audience whenever he appears on stage.

The production, one of the best I have seen in The Peoples, was thoroughly enjoyed by a full house.

Jeanette Oliver's sprightly performance as Ann Marten is

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