

Painful time for a desert travelers

By KEITH NURSE,

"I'M NOT staying here one more minute," cries the go attractive young woman who is stranded in the Sahara Desert with her, middle-aged travelling companion, and an Arab guide.

The distress of agitated Helena in .. The Gazelles at the Shaw Theatre is understandable enough, There she is poor lost girl, miles from nowhere and in the company of an impotent refugee from London with no real human values and a bore of a Bedouin who rambles on about the mysterious power of, the desert.

The Play, by Ahmed Fagih, an Arab dramatist, is presented as part of a cultural season arranged by what is known as the Union of Libyan Writers and Artists. The author means well and he has a message of some cultural substance to relay. But, oh dear, he does make heavy weather of it all.

His three travellers, stuck as they are With painfully lame lines beneath a merciless sun, have every reason to feel that the gods are against them . But the plight of 'Wealthy Victor is of some symbolic significance. Having spent an unfulfilling lifetime in oil research he has now reached the end of his journey 'With no petrol for his car and no water for his brittle body.

Plagued by delusions and the inadequacies of his past life, the man comes face to face with some of the banal facts of life.

Life," he murmurs as the home truth dawns on him, "is like a wrist Watch - any moment can stop."

Meanwhile, the desert ravished by intruding oilmen, demands, so to speak, its pound of flesh. Beautiful but wailing Helena (Annette Lynton) is to be the sacrifice out, in the strange and decidedly uncertain' final sequence, they all face up to it (her companions played by Rio Fanning and Taylor McAuley included) with a wistful song. in the circumstances, the desert more than deserves to win .

Director : Farouk El Demerdash.