

Kierkegaard

BRISTOL REVUNIONS' production of Richard Osborne and Alison Wood's new play on the life and meaning of the Danish Christian Existentialist is a totally engaging piece of theatre, whose impact is heightened by the close focus of the two-person cast on the sparse set.

Alternatively brightly alive and morbidly melancholic, Richard Osborne plays a convincing Kierkegaard, with even the at-first too-sudden a rejection of his fiancée Regine Olsen illustrating the dark impenetrable mysteries of his character.

Obsessed with sin and guilt, and denouncing the compromises of the church of his day, Kierkegaard believes he must sacrifice himself as Christ did, yet seems unaware of the moral dilemmas posed when a loved one must be sacrificed too. The production powerfully conveys Kierkegaard's self-preoccupation in his pursuit of "the ideal", his ceaseless inner turmoil which finally overwhelms his yearning to love and be loved by another human being, and the devotion and final sadness of Regine Olsen, most capably played by Emily Watson. This play asks very profound questions, yet avoids the didactic.

B. G. Cooper