

a clean-cut professional soldier. Ideal spy material, in fact. He only betrays emotion in the bedroom. Those scenes, with whore, boy and the Countess he marries, are shot with a burning, urgent intensity.

Alas, Gill's careful production, handsomely designed and costumed by Tom Piper and Pamela Howard, runs at four-and-a-quarter hours, which is insupportable. Going to the Barbican is anyway like going to prison. Leaving the place should feel like release on parole, not the end of 10 years' porridge.

Next door in the Pit, Joseph Fiennes, Ralph's brilliant junior bro, is playing Jesus Christ as a sob-in-the-voice, pious, huh-huhing demagogue who fondles the wood that shall constitute his cross.

This is the one interesting idea in Dennis Potter's translated TV play, *Son of Man* (1969), spiritedly directed by Bill Bryden in the macho, memorable style of his 1980s RNT heyday, and specifically that of *The Mysteries*. Potter's text, however, is not a patch on Tony Harrison's modernised medievalism. Admittedly the jejune cry of 'You cannot love money and God' in the rewritten Sermon on the Mount sounds fresh and unusual, in the same way that Priestley's socialist battle-cry in *An Inspector Calls* takes an audience marinated in Thatcherism by surprise. But *Son of Man* cannot begin to compare with the radical beauty of the 'Jesus' films which flank it, Pasolini's erotic and dignified *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*

(1964) and Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988).

Bryden's trusty team of designer Hayden Griffin and lighting designer Andy Phillips (who has also arranged some beautiful illumination of *A Patriot For Me*) and, especially, composer John Tams, delivers the goods: 'popular' theatre on a cruciform stage with great performances not only from Fiennes but also from a quizzical John Standing as Pontius Pilate and the increasingly zany Philip Locke as Caiaphas.

Alan Bates is a guilt-ridden, evasive Solness in Peter Hall's staid new version of Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, ably supported by Gemma Jones as his frozen, grief-stricken wife and the talented new Victoria Hamilton as the girl who comes to

## Coveney on Son Of God

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