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LAST ANALYSIS
by Michael Billington

WILHELM REICH, the great apostle of sexual revolution, is a fascinating subject for a play. Rejected by Freud and Einstein, attacked by the Communist Party, scorned by the Scandinavians, and imprisoned by the Americans, he combines the qualities of martyr and prophet. But the problem with Roland Bowden's "**The Last Analysis**," part of the New Plays Festival at the Questors, Ealing, is that it seems far too cool, chaste, and academic a study of a man who preached the virtues of unrestrained sex.

The framework of the play is a session between Reich and an analyst in Lewisburg Penitentiary, 1957; and this gives Mr Bowden the chance to cram in a good deal of hard fact and whisk us back to key episodes from Reich's past life without too much crashing of gears. The problem is that Mr Bowden's reticence deprives the play of any sense of passionate commitment. You feel that he is generally on the side of Reich's sexual liberalism (free birth control and contraceptive advice, universal sex education, no persecution of homosexuals) but that he is wary of his theory that Orgone energy is the driving force of the Universe and that he even feels Reich's persecution was partially self-inspired. Not once in the entire evening did I ever believe (as in Makavejev's dazzling "W.R.—Mysteries of the Organism") that the author loved or hated his subject; and the total absence of any eroticism seems to me a serious defect in a study of a man who attached such global importance to perfect orgasm.

I grant the play gives us neatly encapsulated biography and makes out a good case against Freud as someone over-concerned with social coherence and hierarchical order. And David Gower's production, though often painfully slow, contains a striking performance from Peter Holmes, as the psychiatrist, who shows he has the rare capacity to listen to what other people are saying. But in the end it seems an oddly antiseptic and cerebral portrait of a man whose great virtue was that all his shrewdest insights were aimed below the belt.