

British Theatre Guide

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Manifesting Mrs Marx

Clara Francesca

Paradise in Augustines

3–17 August 2019



Manifesting Mrs Marx is a visually startling, angry response to the historical depiction of Jenny Marx.

We know that Jenny made readable copies of her husband Karl's writing, often engaging with him critically about his work and having her own strong views about the world in which they lived. She had given up a much easier life to support him and their children through desperate poverty in London. Yet this remarkable woman is often given a poor report by historians.

We hear about these things in Clara Francesca's show mostly performed as a surreal provocation, a questioning of the way we represent someone as much as it is a representation of the person themselves.

She arrives to the stage within a huge coat she holds so her head isn't showing. The coat we are told is Karl Marx.

Her face when it emerges is painted clown-like, her movements a clown dance as a voiceover gives instructions on how to talk, the nonsense line that gets repeated often being "speaking at the pace of perfection."

And the contorting clown after a while does give us her internal monologue as Jenny Marx. But no sooner are we adjusting to some unusual sequence than she switches to a different scenario.

One moment she is standing on a chair speaking to us in total darkness with our eyes closed, another moment she is speaking about little Jenny and then can suddenly switch to being an actor describing her lack of control in shaping a character already defined by the writer, the director and others.

This show never pauses in its imaginative, engaging, often disorientating performance. You are never quite sure where it is heading, or what will come next. It never lost my attention for a moment and had me talking to people about it for hours afterwards.

Reviewer: [Keith Mckenna](#)