

Cyriel Buysee's 1903 Flemish classic *The Van Paemel Family* is a compelling story of class struggle. It is lovingly portrayed by Valentin Dhaenens, and the humour and warmth of his character acting keeps you engrossed throughout. Dhaenens is a one-man army (literally) and he offers a tour-de-force of character acting as he interacts with the entire family (all played by himself) in a clever digital rendering. Dark humour and witty distortion of the digitally rendered family keeps the play upbeat even when the story itself plunges the family from one tragedy to the next.

Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser theorised that the 'ideological state apparatus' is the mechanism which preserves established social norms that benefit the ruling class. The Van Paemel family highlights how society, the church, and patriarchal family structure hold together the oppressive social dynamic between the peasant family of the Van Paemels and the landowning class who subject the family to their ceaseless demands. But the established social norms are evidently creaking throughout as one of his sons joins a Socialist insurgency. The

crushing circumstances that drives his family to seek pastures new.

A thoroughly enjoyable production with a compelling story and a charming one-actor ‘cast’.

C. Hourigan Rae

Previous:

[EDITORIAL: THE POWER OF PRIDE](#)

Next:

[FRINGE REVIEW: THE COLLIE’S SHED](#)

[DONATE](#) [ADVERTISE](#)

[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)

Sign up to
our mailing
list

Site by Romulus Studio