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Theatre: I Am My Own Wife



[I Am My Own Wife »](#)



Assembly @ St George's West ([map](#))

Aug 06-25

18:30 (1:10)

£10.00 to £11.00

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The life of a German transvestite and part-time secret police agent is handled with aplomb

Friday 10 August by [Yasmin Sulaiman](#)

Thanks to the phenomenal success of German film *The Lives of Others*, interest in the Stasi, the former East German secret police, has skyrocketed of late. More than anything, people seem confounded by the deep level of complicity, the sheer extent to which ordinary East Germans were involved in spying on each other. Essentially, it's this sense of disbelief that Doug Wright's Pulitzer Prize-winning play uses to draw its audience in.

This one-man-play documents Wright's real life visits to Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a German transvestite (born Lothar Berfelde) known for her impressive collection of 1890s antiques. Having survived the repressive regimes of Fascism and Communism, Mahlsdorf becomes a subject of deep curiosity for Wright and, following reunification, for Germany as a whole. But when her former involvement with the Stasi comes to light, her newfound fame takes a downward turn.

Kevin Loreque, the impressive lone performer, plays around thirty different characters in *I Am My Own Wife* with aplomb,

his careful handling of mannerisms and voices meaning that the audience is almost never left confused. However, the play simply doesn't maintain enough suspense to make the mystery that was Charlotte's life all that interesting. Moreover, its heavy-handed insistence that Charlotte is a "living museum" is too deliberate and, while her death in 2002 means that no one will ever know the full story about her role in the Stasi, the play's reliance on this ambiguity to carry it along is ultimately what lets it down. Nevertheless some slick acting on Loreque's part makes for a worthwhile, if slightly unsatisfying, performance.

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