



First Night Feature: The Dead School

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A decrepit schoolroom currently fills the stage of the [Tricycle theatre](#). Paper litters the floor, wallpaper clings desperately to the walls and windows are covered with bin liners. The classroom has seen better days. [The Dead School](#)'s cast of five tells the story of those times gone by.

At the centre of the play are two parallel lives: Sean Campion's teacher from the old school – in every sense – Raphael Bell, is a man rooted in the tradition of Ireland, staunchly Catholic, Irish-speaking and not averse to doling out painful punishment; Nick Lee's initially carefree, new-school Malachy Dudgeon uses an entirely new way of teaching and leads a modern, 1970s way of life, free from tradition and religion. Yet for all their differences, both men struggle with crushing realities.

In the hands of director Pdraic McIntyre, Pat McCabe's play leaps around like a fidgety Riverdancer and it takes time for the audience to settle into the fast-paced changes of location and time that punctuate the story. With so much going on, it is sometimes hard to know where to focus. It is like an Irish stew into which a nervous chef has thrown a few too many ingredients.

It is remarkable that the universally energetic cast, who throw themselves into all manner of roles and characters throughout the course of the evening, are still standing by the end or know who they are. Theatrical chameleon Peter Daly probably has the pick of the parts, reveling in roles as a repetitive, robotic school inspector, a lisping lecturer and a masked, jiggling beggarman with a seemingly deathly touch.

The picture drawn by McCabe's words is of a changing country where folk songs are replaced by Van Morrison and dull grey suits are brightened with splashes of orange or floral designs; a country hitting a newer, freer age. Some prosper, some do not. But as the trappings of life change, both old and new face exactly the same

dangers and struggles.

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Show Details: [The Dead School](#)

showing at: [Tricycle Theatre](#)

box Office: 020 7328 1000

Details

Age: General

Genre: Play

Sub Genre: Play (Drama)

previews from: 22.02.2010

opening night: 24.02.2010