

Absolution's Homicidal Avenger Gets His Irish Up

Owen O'Neill brings his one-man show to 50E59 Theaters

A A [Comments \(0\)](#) By [Eric Grode](#) Wednesday, Sep 22 2010

Rangy and remorseless, with a shock of ginger hair, the unnamed narrator of [Owen O'Neill's](#) twisty monodrama *Absolution* makes the side of the angels look like a decidedly creepy place to be. A sort of Dexter of the Emerald Isle, he trains his homicidal energies on the pedophile priests who apparently run rampant in this stretch of Irish countryside.



Ari Mintz

Hide your priests!

Details

Absolution

By Owen O'Neill
59E59 Theaters
59 East 59th Street
212-279-4200, [59e59.org](#)

O'Neill, who also stars, brings a sweaty physicality to the recollections of his acts, the gruesome work of a sociopath with a messianic streak: "I was doing this on God's behalf, because I knew that sooner or later he would come around to my way of thinking." His nimble baritone voice and coiled body language are more than up to the task of embodying the play's many victims and victimizers, with the exception of an ill-advised "dialogue" he conducts with himself, abetted by some prerecorded audio.

Certain nagging questions go unresolved for nearly all of *Absolution* (part of this year's 1st Irish Theatre Festival, courtesy of [Dublin's](#) Gúna Nua Theatre): How is it that our protagonist literally can't go relieve himself in the woods without stumbling onto a predatory priest? Wouldn't the absence of five local clergymen warrant a more rigorous police investigation? And where's the backstory? What kind of serial

killer denies his audience a list of formative sins and pathologies that have set him on his murderous path?

By the end, however, a pair of plot twists address all of these questions and quirks. They come with the speed and severity of a grisly O. Henry short story, vaulting *Absolution* from a diverting case study into a shiversome look at the co-opting of evil. Both God and His self-appointed executioner, it seems, work in mysterious ways.