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# Dispatches from The Fringe - Green Street is powerful but unfocused

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Green Street  
*Percolate*

## Green Street

Rating: ★★★★★

[Green Street](#) Courthouse holds an important place in Ireland's history, most notably for being the location of Robert Emmet's trial and famous speech from the Dock. In recent times, from 1972 till it moved in 2009, it served as the Special Criminal Court. In Percolate's production, *Green Street*, history becomes drama in this fascinating piece of site-specific theatre which invests the old courthouse with new life.

Part tour, part performance, *Green Street* begins with audience members being assigned a group before being taken on a tour. Following your legal guide you are escorted to various parts of the building. There's the Press Room, where a legal secretary espouses views on the importance of justice, paper and how Capuchin monkeys have an innate sense of fair play. From there it's off to the cells, with walls covered in Republican graffiti, where two men await trial for the 1882,

Maamtrasna murders. Passing through the court, where James Joyce often sat in the public gallery, you enter the Judges room to hear of the responsibility of handing out sentences, even when that requires hanging a woman. Finally, the Annex, where Robert Emmet, his Solicitor and the Attorney General prepare to go to trial.

Inside the Courtroom the cases of Robert Emmet, the Maamtrasna murders and the Murrays, accused of capital murder in 1976, all take place simultaneously. Proceedings jump from one case to another and are interspersed with random facts and information. This lent a disjointed feel to events, making them difficult to follow and engage with. Performance from Charlie Bonner as the defence, Daniel Reardon as the Principle Judge, Ciaran McMahon as the Prosecution and Elliot Moriarty as Robert Emmet were riveting and contributed to the powerful sense of drama that pervaded the courtroom. Yet there was a sense of too much drama, of a production with too much going on. As each story distracted from the others and fought for dominance, the overall effect was unsettling creating a lack of symmetry that was most apparent at the end. Once the crowd had calmed after Emmet's rousing speech and the Judge's sentence, a proud Emmet walked towards his destiny to the sound of bells ringing his death kneel. The effect was powerful and poignant. Projecting an image of two Capuchin monkeys onto the wall above the judges at this time seriously misjudged the moment, and the audience, and undermined the overall effect.

At its best *Green Street* is a powerful piece of site specific theatre. But in trying to be all things to all people it loses much of its impact. With a little judicious pruning and some focused restructuring *Green Street* could become a truly memorable theatre experience.

*Green Street* runs at Green Street Courthouse, until Saturday 22nd. Performances are at 7.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. Tickets are €14.00



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