

SPEECH NIGHT

Originally performed at the 1999 Melbourne Fringe, Speech Night was Damian's first solo show and set the course for the character driven comedy for which he has become renowned.

The show, in which Damian plays over 10 characters, plays out in real time the last ever "Speech Night" at the infamous St.Basil's College which is being forced to close it's doors. According to the embittered headmaster falling enrolments; reduced government subsidies and lethargic parent auxiliaries have forced the school into an unwanted merger with its more progressive sister school.

At the helm of the sinking ship is Mr. Henry Vestige. A man hell bent on ensuring that the last flicker of conservatism isn't snuffed out without a grass fire.

However at the schools farewell "Speech Night" the firebreak gets out of control as a variety of factors conspire to reveal the unscrupulous headmaster's role in the college's demise.

The night unravels with a blessing from the chaplain; student drama presentations and some illuminating speeches by members of the school community. This is interspersed with the shared wisdom of a number of the school's most famed old boys who've come back to share of their success. The alumni includes a former AFL star with new age sensibilities and a Broadway dancer happy to shred his old school tie.

SHOW HISTORY

- 1999** Melbourne Fringe Festival [Runner-Up Best Comedy]
- 2000** Adelaide Fringe Festival
- 2000** Melbourne Comedy Festival
- 2000 –2005** Various educational organisations

REVIEW

Michael Ward
Herald Sun 16/4/00

Damian Callinan's brilliant one-man show is among the best on offer at this year's Comedy Festival. The minutiae of a Catholic secondary school are exceptionally well observed and the script is superb. Like any decent speech night, the show has plenty of variety.

There is the student drama group's hilariously earnest 'Drugs Are Really Quite Bad' and of course the student awards including the 'Headmasters Sycophant Award'. Several old boys has his chance to pass on his wisdom at the lectern while the night is hosted by the unscrupulous headmaster, Henry Vestige.

The show's real triumph is Callinan's performance.

In an hour long show, he plays close to a dozen characters. Each is perfectly realised without the aid of props or costumes – instead Callinan's masterful control of accent and gesture gives them life.