Through extremes in a kind of communion

THEATRE

By HELEN MUSA

Thirst... Is a Place, Water to Bu
ed from a text by Christophe
for Splinters Theatre Company
oration with Nico Lathouris, B
Natex. Wed-Sat, 8pm, until Sep
11pm late shows, August 28
tember 4. Pro-Am.

THE THEATRE, etymolo
a place of seeing, of
Splinters Theatre company ha
reputation as a "theatre of s
and in this production seeks t
that reputation further.

Audiences will still discern the characteristic Splinters' touches — fireworks explode from a caravan as two lovers embrace.

Visual artists have made Natex Building F look unbelievably opulent, with candelabra, a star-chamber effect in lighting, an enormous mystery-play carriage and evocative costumes.

But in making use of performance-writer Chris Barnett's dense text, Splinters has made a change and invited us to listen to words.

Words, we used to be told, are the means to articulation, but to Barnett they are also a form of rape.

Director Lathouris has chosen to use them so, with a passionate, aggressive utterance style often lost in the desert spaces of Natex.

The chief individuals, played variously by David Branson, Lyndal Cureton, Bronwen Gault, Steven Howard, Justine Lawler, Anne-Marie Sinclair and Patrick Troy, give harrowing, deeply felt performances as they enact a ritual representation of the intrusion of strangers and the resulting transformational experience.

But with the archetypes of harpy-propheteess, chess-player, fiddler and manipulative stranger, these performers are no more part of a conventional plot than priests in a ritual.

Thirst...Is a Place is dominated by a powerful and thoroughly disciplined chorus trained by Renald Navarro.

Splinters has invited its audiences to "pass through" an experience of extremes with it in a kind of communion.

Since most congregations already know the formulae and the words, the company now needs to help its spectators to an understanding of the performance libretto in such a way as not to interfere with the rich experience it offers.