The Canberra Youth Theatre turns 20

IT'S HARD to get past the excitement at Canberra Youth Theatre this week. The group is about to turn 20 and is gearing up for a "mammoth birthday party" next Friday.

It has an exciting triple bill called *Last Night at the Theatre* as part of the festive mood. You can still catch it today and tomorrow at the Gorman House studios at 8pm. The show features the award-winning production *The Interview*, directed by Leisa Shelton.

● *While the ACT arts community will hardly be surprised at the general recommendations of the standing committee on the inquiry into possible uses of the $19 million casino premium, it might be little shocked at the apparent input of the ACT Cultural Council to deliberations.*

According to a council member, Peter Bycroft, giving evidence before this committee, the council has been hindered in opening up possibilities for cultural development by grant "lock-in" and the "welfare mentality" which he believes pervade the ACT arts community.

Mr Bycroft says over $1 million in recurrent expenditure could be saved by more strategic location of arts facilities. Unfortunately the impression of his input is that artists are an inefficient, bungling lot, at odds with all the evidence we see about us of fine-tuned management on a shoestring. Nothing is set in stone of course, since debate on this report has been adjourned.

And the suggested uses of casino money to date? $2.56 million for an Aboriginal keeping place, a mysterious $2.75 million for "regional facilties", $1.5 million for essential maintenance and refurbishment of the Natex site and $5 million to bring the Canberra Theatre Playhouse up to 600-seat respectability with possible development of The Link.

Finally suggested is $7.5 million for a cultural and heritage facility in the city which could take in a range of youth theatre and music venues, a home for Gaudeamus, a writers' centre and a regional gallery.

The committee favours the recently renovated North Building. An alternative mentioned in the paper is the Childers Street-Rocks area, further away from the watchful eyes of the Legislative Assembly.

● George Gittoes, whose fine show *Heavy Industry* has twice been exhibited here in the last year or so, at Studio One and at the Drill Hall Gallery, is the winner of the 1992 Blake Prize for Religious Art.

Announced on Thursday at the Blaxland Gallery, Sydney by Professor Eric Sharpe, the $10,000 prize goes to Gittoes for his painting *Ancient Prayer*, praised for its "powerfully felt human response to contemporary life".

A CAPITAL LIFE

By Helen Musa

● *Canberra Times* artist Ian Sharpe assures us that graphic design is on the up and up in Canberra. Evidence of this was seen on Thursday evening, when Colin Wood, editor of international design magazines *Design World* and *Design Ink*, launched an exhibition of work by graduating graphic-design students of the University of Canberra in the foyer of the National Library. The three-year bachelor's degree in graphic design takes in typography, computer graphics, illustration and more. The exhibition runs daily 9-5 till December 17.

● *It's becoming almost part of the landscape. Camilla Blunden and Chrissie Shaw's long-running presentation of* Over the Hill, *a play concerning menopause originally scripted by Merrilee Moss, has been turned into a video, by courtesy of the Office of the Status of Women and the ACT Health Promotion fund. Canberra writer Sarah Dowse will launch this project, which is aimed to leave women "feeling more positive about their own ageing and about their solidarity with other women".*

● There has been rather a lot of "arts discourse" about town of late. That voluble ACT Cultural Council member Dr Amar Galla introduced Charles Landry at Tuesday's *Towards the Creative City* seminar at the Bogong Theatre with much eloquence about arts development.

Landry, founding director of *Comedia*, one of Britain's leading arts-consultancy groups, was involved in the Glasgow European City of Culture project, the Barcelona arts component of the 1992 Cultural Economic Strategy plan and most recently a consultancy in Cracow.

A facile and persuasive speaker, Landry says people in the arts "need a common discourse", complimenting Dr Galla on "the way you make connections out of anything". There was no shortage of dis-

"the way you make connections out of anything". There was no shortage of discourse, but Landry failed to convince with his argument that elitism in *les beaux arts* is a phenomenon of the late 20th century. It's at least as old as Aristotle.

● This column hasn't heard from Kate Peters in a while, so we were surprised when she rang in to say that she and comedian Judy Burnett had got together with other



Oscar Parsonson, right, and the cast of *The Interview*: part of the Youth Theatre's birthday celebrations.

showbiz people, including gold-fingered Tony Magee at the piano, to present a nostalgic musical evening, *Hooray for Hollywood*, at the Southern Cross Club. This finishes tonight with dinner and show, and is produced by Top Hat Productions.

● *Splinters Theatre of Spectacle denies that there is gunpowder in its Wentworth Avenue, Kingston, sign for next week's show* Flowers of Gold. *Part of its new, responsible, mature image is that of proper fire-prevention techniques, including the use of attractive protective apparel.*

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● Your last chance to see Wendy Dent's one-person show *Nobody* at Stage Coach's Mawson Studios is today at 6 and 8pm. Written on the unlikely themes of ennui and suicide, it is held together by absorbing tensions, says director Joe Woodward, adding that it "belongs to a class of expression uncontaminated by market research". Fascinating letter to us from Joe, in which he debates the right to explore unpopular themes in theatre.

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● This weekend is awash with performances and occasions.

Critics Circle Award winner Canberra Choral Society joins Canberra Pro-Arte Orchestra to be conducted by the mercurial Christopher Lyndon Gee, at 8 tonight at the Canberra School of Music. With Purcell, Schutz and Bach — *The Christmas Magnificat* — it's a proper seasonal offering, with Melbourne star Janet Healy joining Canberra singers Judith Dodsworth and Carl Cooper. At 4pm tomorrow Adrian Chan and Penny Crosskey are performing a duo piano recital in Rehearsal Room 3, School of Music.

At Tilleys at nine tonight there is the *Ole Ole Ole* Flamenco Dance show. The Betsy Sawers School of Dancing winds up the year with *Alice's Wonderland* at 2 and 8 pm today at Hawker College Theatre.

Tomorrow, Elizabeth Dalman, founder of the Australian Dance Theatre, is holding an afternoon of dance and music at Mirramu, Lake Road, Bungendore.

Coralie Wood, the unsinkable, fresh from promoting Tarzan's Theatre Restaurant's *The Good Ship Lollipop*, has all the town sculling off to the same venue tomorrow at lunch for Jodie Gillies's new Festival album launch.