Backstage

Hear the word

Theatre

By NICOLE LEEDHAM

SPLINTERS Theatre Company is recognised for coming up with new, unusual and interesting productions, and its latest effort is no exception.

With mythical beings and battles of good versus evil, *The Oracle* uses five square kilometres of Weston Park to tell its story.

The audience follows the tale of the Avatar (Victoria Spence, left), from her water birth to her confrontation with the evil Imagus.

Assembling at the Weston Park carpark, each audience member is told the story of the messiah, the Avatar, by the Magyar, her devotees.

Each is then given a personal tape recorder with music and rest of the story as they follow the cast through the park, using the miniature railway and maze as part of the set.

According to Splinters' artistic director, David Branson, *The Oracle* is a "mythical journey".

"The Avatar is this big techno woman, a being of higher consciousness, but she's also just a woman," he said.

"The audience follow her through her journey after she escapes from the Imagus."

Apart from the Imagus, the Avatar and the Magyar, other characters included a Free Woman Zealots group and a "media tribe", with video cameras and journalists taking note and recording everything.

The Oracle is the result of Splinters' interest in a pan-cultural search for meaning.

On a recent tour of the Riverina and rural NSW, the company began a series of workshops addressing not the differences that exist between cultures, but the similarities.

Why was it, the company asked, that humanity understands and reconciles its position in the universe through the narrative of a Godhead?

The question asked in *The Oracle* is whether the Avatar represents the fulfilment of the Oracle, a bringer of wisdom, a political activist or is she a false prophet — another Jim Jones prepared to lead her followers to their death?

Audience members cannot be mere watchers-on, they are protagonists to the final outcome.

According to Branson, it is important for Splinters to not only be spectacular but to tell a story — *The Oracle* does that.

***The Oracle* is being performed at Weston Park tonight to Saturday and next Wednesday to Saturday, at 7.30pm. Bookings can be made on 257 1077.**